Canadian Library History Blog 4

Canadian Library History Blog is a convenient way to post information, book reviews, and comments about Canadian library history. Why have a blog on Canadian library history? There is a concern with contemporary library political, administrative, economic, and social issues that are relevant to library history. What influence does the study of the "past" have on the "present?" I try to show that there is a dual function that critical history performs: it helps us understand how past thoughts and actions were shaped and it provides us with a deeper awareness of present changes. In this context, past events, facts, trends, and people can be examined using historical methods and critical theories. As well, we can gain an understanding of explanations for causes and consequences, the use of narratives and evidence, and different versions of the past.

We are constantly reinterpreting history (as events and as historical accounts) using new concepts which emerge from uncovering more evidence and rethinking accepted facts in the light of new ideas and research methodology. “History” can be taken to mean what we accept happened in the past (or, conversely, what did not take place); it can also mean what is written as a result of continuous dialogue: what took place (events); why or how things happened (explanations); who was involved (personages); when did events occur (chronological dimension); and how ideas were formed and the influence they had on contemporaries.

Historical understanding helps us to comprehend cause-and-effect relationships and to avoid judging the past (and by extension "today") in terms of current norms and values. By looking at past library events and decisions in Ontario and across Canada we can develop alternative approaches to contemporary conditions based on a better awareness of the likely consequences. Historical memory is one of the keys to self-identity.

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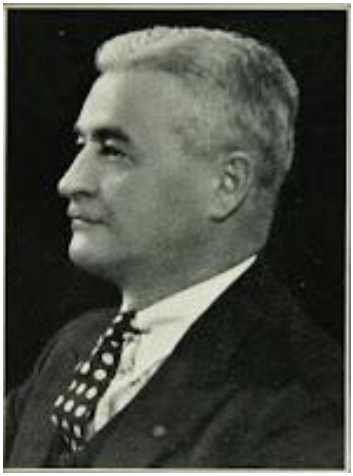
Thursday, November 27, 2025

George-Émile Marquis and Public Libraries in Quebec before 1945

Nos bibliothèques publiques, by Georges-Émile Marquis. Québec: Éditions du Terroir, 1925, 16 p., illus.
Plaidoyer pour les bibliothèques publiques, by Georges-Émile Marquis. Montréal: L'Oeuvre des tracts, 1946, 16 p.



G-É Marquis, c. 1930s

In 1890, the government of Quebec passed a statute, the *Municipal Aid to Public Libraries* (Chapter 34), authorizing municipalities to approve bylaws to "aid, in conformity with the laws governing them, the establishment and maintenance of free public libraries in their municipalities or in adjoining municipalities." This law also stipulated similar permissive assistance for library associations and mechanics' institutes. The city of Westmount, on the island of Montreal, was the first to create a municipal library under this statute in 1899. Yet, the vast majority of communities in Quebec continued to be served by *bibliothèques paroissiales*, that is, small local collections created and managed by the Catholic Church for use by parishioners since the mid-19th century. These libraries offered 'wholesome reading' with an emphasis on Catholic values and they were operated, for the most part, by priests and volunteers.

There were critics of the dominance of clerical influence in Quebec society, such as André Siegfried (1875–1959), a French academic and political writer who authored the *Le Canada, les deux races* (1906) published in English in 1907. Despite his critique of clerical power, he proposed that French speaking Canadians had formed a "national" identity and affiliation with French civilization. His view influenced generations of Quebec leaders and was especially prevalent when G-É Marquis was writing about life in Quebec during the first half of the 20th century. Siegfried believed that it was necessary to encourage Québécois to modernize and escape from the constraints of conservative Catholic traditionalism to become a more liberal, secular society.

Public library formation through municipalities was one such step where he felt the opposition of Church was a negative force.

Ecclesiastical resistance to the establishment of secularized municipal public libraries remained strong, even in Quebec's urban centre, Montreal, where the city council, forced to turn down a $150,000 Carnegie promised grant made in 1901, eventually erected a public library. The Bibliothèque de la Ville de Montréal, a beautiful, classic Beaux-Arts style building, became the city's central public library after its official opening in May 1917. However, its holdings were deficient for a city of more than 600,000, borrowing was subject to a $3 to $6 deposit, and French-language publications were lacking. By the mid-1920s, only small steps had been taken toward municipal tax-supported public libraries in Quebec. There were few writers or journalists publishing articles in newspapers, journals, or monographs advocating the adoption of this type of library which was making greater strides in English-speaking countries.

One such author, largely ignored in Canadian public library histories, was Georges-Émile Marquis, who was born in Saint-Pierre-de-Montmagny in 1878. He became a teacher after graduating from the Laval Normal School in 1896; then, he taught schoolchildren for a short time before becoming a school inspector after 1905. A few years later, he was appointed Chief Statistician of the Quebec Bureau of Statistics in 1914. Marquis had an eclectic range of interests spanning history, economics, travel, the presidency of the Canadian Club at Quebec City, and the honorary rank of colonel in the Lévis Regiment. As a member of the Société des Auteurs Canadiens and the Société des Arts, Sciences et Lettres, he was intent on publishing his lectures and issuing small pamphlets: one such special focus was the library situation in Quebec. This attentiveness became a vocation, when, in 1934, he was appointed as Director of the Library of the Legislator, a position he held in Quebec City until his retirement in 1952.

G.-É. Marquis and *Nos bibliothèques publiques*, 1925

Marquis' first library publication, *Nos bibliothèques publiques*, drew on his knowledge of general statistics for all types of libraries collected by the provincial government as well as his practical experience as an inspector of school libraries. His booklet reprinted his speech to the French section of the Canadian Authors Association held at the Château Frontenac, Quebec City, on May 4, 1925, in advance of the Book Week held across the province. Marquis, an entertaining and informative speaker, demonstrated a conversational style and interest in book learning, libraries, and the notion of cultural progress in Quebec. Although he addressed all types of libraries, it was clear throughout his talk that he interpreted 'public library' in a broad sense to include municipalities, societies, schools, and parish libraries.

Drawing on statistics for 1924 tabulated by the Bureau, he stated there were 1,899 public libraries with holdings of 3,853,815 volumes and pamphlets in the province—the vast majority of which were school libraries. There were 225 parish libraries and just a handful, 30, designated as public libraries (p. 12). By comparison, Marquis used comparative figures from the Ontario Department of Education to calculate that Quebec's neighbour held 3,315,346 volumes in 466 public libraries (free and association) and 5,645 school libraries, for a total of 6,111 libraries. Marquis suggested his comparison might give pause for consideration because, under Ontario legislation there were 195 free public libraries supported by municipal taxation serving more than 1,500,000 people, i.e. about half the provincial population.

For the most part, in his opening section (pp. 3–7), Marquis provided a reliable account of the growth of private, public, and semi-public libraries from the period of New France to the early 20th century. Major libraries were mainly in Montreal and Quebec City where there were leading figures in religious, educational, or commercial fields. Surprisingly, he does not mention the well-known exploits of Alexandre Vattemare in the early 1840s to establish book exchanges, a program that received much attention at the time. Marquis does highlight the historiography of library related contributions by Eugène Rouillard, Pierre-Georges Roy, Édouard-Zotique Massicotte, Aegidius Fauteux, and the neglected history of Frederick C. Wurtele on the valuable library (still active today) of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. A second section (pp. 7–11) summarizes the development of printing, publishing, and book collecting beginning with the *Gazette de Québec* in 1764. One notable collection, the library of Philéas Gagnon, 8,000 volumes, was purchased for $31,000 and became the property of the Montreal Municipal Library in 1910. The entire collection was a prominent feature of the new Beaux-Arts library opened on Sherbrooke Street East.

The final two sections of *Nos bibliothèques publiques* provide Marquis' knowledgeable statistical summary, followed by a concluding part (pp. 14–16) providing some optimism for future progress. He notes current provincial efforts to fund Canadian books for Quebec schools, the efforts of journalists and editors of popular newspapers and periodicals to supply reading for the public and indirectly to promote libraries. He closes by observing that private initiatives strengthened by public assistance can improve present conditions and develop an abundant source of notable Canadian books that would contribute to "les nombreux chefs-d'oeuvre de la littérature française."

G.-É. Marquis and a Plea for Public Libraries in Quebec, 1946

Two decades later, in 1946, Marquis expanded the theme of public libraries more directly. This pamphlet is more polished and displays greater knowledge of

librarianship that he gained after a decade in his office as Librarian of the Legislative Library. In his opening, he reaffirmed his life-long love of books, “Sans livres, que ferions-nous pour nous cultiver ou nous évader? me suis-je souventes fois demandé, et c’est pourquoi je m’apitoie sur le sort des populations qui en sont privées.” [Without books, what would we do to cultivate ourselves or to escape? I have often asked myself, and that is why I am sorry for the populations deprived of them.] To bolster his case for the universality of public library development beyond Anglo-American librarianship, Marquis cites an unusual source neglected throughout North America: The League of Nations International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, which mainly operated from Paris from 1922 to 1946. In 1937, this committee published *Mission sociale et intellectuelle des Bibliothèques populaires; Son organisation, ses moyens d'actions* that went on record asserting,

Qu’il s’gisse de l'éducation des jeunes, des adultes et de l'auto-éducation, de procurer un simple délassement de l'esprit, d’enseigner, de renseigner, de former ou de distraire, toujours la bibliothèque populaire offre ses ressources, et sa responsabilité s’en augmente d’autant. [Whether or not it is education for young people, adults, and self-education, providing a simple relaxation for the mind, teaching, informing, training, or entertaining, the public library always offers its resources, and its responsibility increases accordingly (p. 5).]

This early mission statement still rings true in 2025. Marquis also credits Andrew Carnegie’s oft-quoted belief that libraries exist to help those who help themselves as well as Jules Ferry, a French statesman and philosopher, who believed that libraries were a vital asset in education. Further, Marquis, employing a much narrower conception of a ‘public library’ than he relied on in 1926, stated there were only six libraries for predominantly English-speaking readers and four serving French-speaking readers (pp. 2–3), admittedly an unpleasant truth. However, he points to positive changing attitudes to public library development pp. 8–9):

- the formation of l’Association des Bibliothécaires catholiques in 1943 and its call for a reorganization of libraries across the province;
- the proposals by the Conseil de l’École des Bibliothécaires de l’Université de Montréal to consider new avenues to improve library services;
- the call for regional library development by the Société d’Éducation des Adultes du Québec, and
- a Montreal city council investigation into the possibility of establishing city branch libraries.

In viewing the broader postwar landscape, Marquis suggests that Quebec's public library system might be invigorated by potential federal assistance for libraries from Ottawa, especially if they came under the direction of a provincial Department of Public Instruction, based on current denominational lines and free from any political interference (pp.19–11). His proposal looked, in part, to earlier American ideas, but it reflects the fact that Canadian Dominion-Provincial financial relations were under discussion after 1945. A more liberal tone beyond conservative Quebec nationalism is clearly expressed that foreshadows later progressive development (p. 14): "Que Québec me donne des compétences, et j'obtiendrai notre quote-part des faveurs du pouvoir central" [Give me strength in Quebec, and I will get our share of favours from the federal government]. But Marquis asks: where was the leadership to address the question at hand? when might the government act?

The writer proposed that knowledgeable library promoters should take the lead by explaining the utility of public libraries to the public through speeches, radio, and publications. Then, the demand for establishing public libraries could be successful and Quebec could keep pace with library progress in the rest of Canada which was increasingly aligned with American librarianship after Word War II.

The power of libraries to benefit society, Marquis opines, is everlasting as a source of learning. He finishes by illustrating his point with the motto beneath a stained-glass window in his legislative library depicting a woman drawing water from a stream — "Je puise mais n'épuise" [I draw, but I do not exhaust (p. 16)].

Mostly, Marquis is a minor but not entirely forgotten figure in Canadian librarianship. Gaston Bernier has written about his career at the Quebec National Assembly by remarking that he possessed a conservative, military mindset and a standoffish attitude that narrowed his social advancement. Certainly, he did not participate to any degree in library associations, choosing to pursue personal interests that led him to publish more than two dozen small tracts outside the field of libraries. Yet, from the 1920s to the 1940s, his voice advocated for better libraries, especially those supported by municipalities. He wrote at a time when

even three prominent Anglophone authors of *Libraries in Canada* (1933) conceded that the immediate improvement of parish libraries was the most practical step forward for library progress in Quebec due to general political and religious support. After his retirement in 1952, Marquis issued a few publications on Quebec commemorative monuments, Mexico, and his regiment at Lévis. He died in 1960 in Quebec City.

Further Reading:

An article by Gaston Bernier discussing the tenure of Marquis at the Legislative Library, "Georges-Émile Marquis (1878-1960): un bibliothécaire dynamique mais rébarbatif," *Documentation et bibliothèques* 58, 2 (2012): 77–83 is available via *Érudit* at this link.

My earlier blog on *Les Bibliothèques Populaires* (1890) by Eugène Rouillard is at this link.

My blog on Raymond Tanghe and his proposal for Quebec libraries in 1952 is at this link.

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Canadian Public Libraries and the Democratic Belief

The ‘Library Faith’ in Books, Reading, and Democracy

PUBLIC
LIBRARY
"Books are keys to wisdom's treasure;
Books are gates to lands of pleasure,
Books are paths that upward lead;
Books are friends. Come, let us read."

A longstanding belief in the positive influence of the public library in 20th-century North American librarianship was encapsulated in the short term, ‘the library faith,’ a visionary construct best articulated in an examination of public library service commissioned by the American Library Association (ALA), the Public Library Inquiry, which published its research from 1947 to 1952. The Inquiry developed this descriptive model of prevailing beliefs guiding the evolution of public libraries to understand and interpret the past in a structured way. Modelling can be helpful in identifying central ideas, beliefs, and opinions during an era when a prevailing consensus exists within a conceptual framework. The extensive Inquiry study noted that librarians, indeed, many educators and political leaders, believed in the beneficent power of books and reading.

Ideally, the library, as a responsible democratic institution, provided free access to printed resources of recreation and knowledge to every person in its community, a prime egalitarian impulse. In this process, librarians contributed to the democratic value of life by offering selected sources of knowledge for personal growth and an informed citizenry to make sound judgements in public affairs. As a democratic political institution, the tax-supported public library served broader social and cultural functions by preserving and organizing printed knowledge for its communities and, ultimately, for the nation. Libraries and librarians were a positive force in an effort to transform individuals and society for the better through the power of reading. The ‘library faith’ was interwoven with democratic structures and ideals: free library access, the appetite for public

reading, the freedom to exchange ideas and opinions, permissive library legislation, government tax support, and the power of knowledge to contribute to the betterment of society.

However, the Inquiry concluded that libraries too often failed to achieve the ideals described in the library faith, such as being a centre of popular education. The reality of everyday library services in 1950 America, including a limited clientele that read serious books, public apathy, the exclusion of many citizens, a lack of funding, and regional inequities, revealed an institution that did not (and could not) live up to its humanistic articles of faith identified in the Inquiry. For librarians and library users, the library faith was a guiding spirit—a virtue—rather than an everyday reality. Censorship was a common feature in libraries where objectionable books were not purchased or safely relegated to restricted shelves. Many citizens were either not eager readers,
preferred 'lightweight' literature, or were excluded unjustly. In fact, many American communities were without library services. The Inquiry advised that the library faith was still relevant as a guide for developing services, but less useful as an argument to secure public support. Instead, libraries should fashion clear, uniform statements about the public library's purpose.

It is axiomatic that democracy means the 'rule of the people.' Free and fair elections give expression to the 'will of the people' that provides the basis of the authority of government. But there are conflicting viewpoints concerning priorities and perspectives about the use of power and the actual desires of citizens. Fundamental civil liberties protect against government interference: freedom of speech and the press, freedom of assembly or association, freedom of worship, and equality before the law. Yet, the public regards many civil rights that provide equal treatment under the law as equally important, such as the right to vote and hold free and fair elections, protection from discrimination, various rights of persons before the law, and the right to a public education. In Canada there are a host of problems besetting representative liberal democracy, issues such as blatant racism, discrimination, suppression of minority rights, sexism, alienation, government transparency, hatred, violence, and political corruption. In this environment, educational concerns and the freedom of expression and thought have been central issues in library history. The traditional democratic library role, as expounded by promoters and librarians, has encouraged people to think for themselves and helped them become enlightened citizens. Democracy requires people who understand and believe in its principles and institutions and are determined to work together to preserve, criticize, and improve it as the public interest evolves. Over the course of time, the library's collections have served as an educational resource, informing citizens, circulating useful knowledge for self-improvement, and incorporating immigrants into the life of the nation. These are desirable roles for fostering and maintaining an educated citizenry in a democracy. But one might question whether an 'informed citizenry' is a necessary condition for a democracy or simply wishful thinking.

No comparable national study to the Public Library Inquiry occurred in 20th-century Canada. Even so, there are numerous statements after 1900 that document the commitment to the idealism embodied in the model outlined in the 'library faith' and support for democratic ideals. An insightful thesis by John Wiseman in 1989 cited the metaphorical concept of 'temples of democracy' to describe the aspirations of Ontario library promoters to bring literature free of charge to the public before 1920. John Hallam and John Taylor, the enthusiastic champions of the free library established in Toronto in 1883, spoke to the need for an intelligent and enlightened populace. Hallam stated, "I know of nothing more useful, nothing more genuinely ornamental or creditable to a community, than the possession of a good free library, by means of which may be enjoyed the productions of the finest minds." Taylor outlined the progress of public libraries in the United States, and opined: "We cannot, of course, compare Toronto with such cities as Boston and Chicago, but surely we should not be outdone by every small manufacturing town in New England in the matter of intelligence."

Ideally, the library was maintained and belonged to the people who benefited equally from the minds of the past through books, newspapers, and journals. In the early development of Canadian free public libraries, successful library referendums on bylaws reflected the 'will of the people' who often accepted the underlying utilitarian argument that free access to books in public libraries produced a greater amount of well-being for a greater number of people. When Hamilton ratepayers voted to establish a public library in 1889, the *Hamilton Spectator* editorial summed up the matter concisely: "It will make the people better able to govern themselves." The requirement for local plebiscites followed by municipal bylaws to establish public libraries was a standard feature of public library legislation into the second half of the 20th century, augmented by provincial government decisions to convert older mechanics' institutes and association libraries into public libraries and offer limited financial support.

But the rationale for tax-supported libraries in its formative stage and adequate accommodation for services was sometimes rejected by electors, as in two large Canadian cities, Kingston and Halifax. At Kingston, on 24 September 1899, the *Whig-Standard* editor complained, "The libraries have not been doing adequate public service, intellectually and as a source of moral recreation. There is a great want in the line of profitable resort [resource] and ready reference." In Halifax, on 5 November 1912, when the issue of establishing a municipal public library arose at a town hall meeting, library supporters were defeated despite requisite democratic oratory from the noted suffragist, Dr. Eliza Ritchie, the first Canadian to receive a PhD (Cornell University). The *Evening Mail* reported: "She defined the aim of the citizens' library as distinctly democratic—that of providing all citizens with the literature they need or desire. It is FOR THE PEOPLE." Kingston (until 1925) and Halifax (until 1951) continued to resist adequate tax-supported public library service with suitable buildings for many years.

The Democratic Conviction in Canadian Librarianship before 1940

Canadian librarians often relied on the persuasive power of democratic rhetoric to advance the cause of public library development, especially in times of war when the founding principles of democracy faced the prospect of suspension. At the 1916 annual ALA meeting at Ashbury Park, New Jersey, an astute promoter of libraries from Toronto, Edwin Austin Hardy, the secretary of the Ontario Library Association (OLA), told his American audience:

The dynamic of library work is the vision of democracy in the coming years. The present giant struggle will leave no nation untouched. One result will be the rush to North America of millions of new population. Another result will be the recasting of the federal relations within the British Empire. Another will be the revision of the international relations of all the great powers. Who can be sufficient for these mighty tasks of the future? An enlightened and ennobled democracy, of sound knowledge, wide sympathy and broad vision can render the highest service in the great days to come. The United States and the Dominion of Canada must be such democracies and the librarian must rank alongside the teacher, the legislator, and the preacher in the making of the new world.

In 1918, another prominent librarian, Mary J.L. Black, told her OLA colleagues:

If a library is not an embodiment of democracy and universal in its service, it is not fulfilling its functions. As a democratic institution the public library stands alone. In it, the scholar and ditcher, the school boy and the society dame are on an equal footing, and service should be rendered them accordingly. In it, the monetary relationship does not exist, for the public are only coming to their own, and if it does not contain material that is of special interest to each one of them, then they indeed have a grievance.

She was not alone in espousing the value of free access to resources. Another early instance was a presidential speech by Helen Gordon Stewart, Victoria Public Library, to the Pacific Northwest Library Association in Spokane, 1921.

There is no way of telling truth from error, but the best test of the power of a truth is to get itself accepted in free competition in the market place, and the Public Library should be the intellectual market place of every community. Democracy needs all the ideas it can get, and a stuffed press or a stuffed library, instead of safeguarding civilization, lead to atrophy and decay.

The democratic theme, coupled with the power of reading, was a key argument to establish public libraries. In 1927, when Canada celebrated its sixtieth anniversary by asserting its national identity more confidently, the Fort William (now Thunder Bay) library entered a parade float with the popular verse, "Books are keys to wisdom's treasure" (above). This phrase came from a short rhyme by the American author, Emilie Poulsson, which included another expression librarians often employed to draw attention to entertaining literature: "books are gates to lands of pleasure." When economic conditions worsened in the 1930s and threatened the economic livelihood of many people, librarians reinforced their ties with democratic ideals and public education. Foremost was George Locke, chief librarian of Toronto Public Library, who declared in 1933, "It is as necessary to provide for adult education as for elementary education, and so the library and the school are necessary for the perpetuation of democracy."

Locke and Mary Black, together with John Ridington, included multiple references to democracy in their Carnegie financed commission survey of libraries published in 1933, *Libraries in Canada*. They put the case for the public library:

The realization that, by ten thousand people each paying the cost of a single book, to be kept available for all in a general collection, each contributor would have access to ten thousand volumes, long ago commended itself to general public judgment as a worthwhile piece of co-operation. This realization is the foundation on which the public library is built—and that foundation is as broad and as strong as democracy itself. (p. 9)

They also contended that the library's resources for reading were a force for personal development and societal good:

...if it is recognized that no one can be educated without books, it inevitably follows that a government should put libraries in the same class with schools, making both compulsory. This contention rests on the basis that modern thought realizes that education of all the people is necessary to the preservation and the permanence of a democratic form of government. (p. 135)

Yet, the democratic spirit did not appeal to everyone, and successes were few outside major cities. As the 1933 survey admitted, three-fourths of Canada's population of 10,500,000 were without public library service of any kind at a time when the rise of ruthless authoritarian regimes threatened the tenets of democracy itself. The depression era devastated national economies on a global scale, thereby halting opportunities for library growth. Cooperative partnerships were one solution with the development of regional library systems through local referendums, being most evident in British Columbia. The American economist, Alvin S. Johnson, reinforced another response in 1938. He authored *The Public Library—A People's University*, giving greater currency to an earlier phrase, and he devoted an entire chapter to "The Public Library in a Democracy." He called upon librarians to be more proactive in educating adults to be knowledgeable citizens, to go beyond book lending and to withstand pressure to provide ephemeral publications. The phrase gained popularity with librarians, but the outbreak of war dimmed immediate prospects for improvement.

Changing Perceptions after 1940

The Second World War was a struggle for freedom and a dramatic period of change for Canada and America. During the war, Canada emerged as a prosperous nation by producing weapons, ships, airplanes, vehicles, and agricultural products for itself and for its allies. Canadians realized that peaceful international relations were vital for their security and came to regard the United States as their primary ally. In May 1940, the Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, issued an influential paper to ALA members that argued librarians should become stronger agents of democracy and assume a more vital role in civic life. Earlier in March, at the annual OLA conference, the president, Kathleen Moyer Elliot, addressed the theme of 'The Library and the Community,' stressing interaction with people and suggesting a refashioning of the 'library faith' by placing more emphasis on community involvement.

But while Books for People as a fundamental purpose of libraries has remained unchanged through the years in which both the character and the care of book collections have changed greatly, the emphasis has shifted. Once it was on Books, now it is on People. Liberal librarians, believing in the importance of the

individual, encouraging every man to read as widely as he will and form his own opinions, are defenders of democracy.

In 1941, a few leaders formed a small national body, the Canadian Library Council, to expedite progress in the library field. It issued a pamphlet, *Canada Needs Libraries*, in 1945, stating that the library possessed resources and educative and recreational potential for all ages. In short, "it has a very special part to play in the life of the community which no other agency can fill."

...the information and enlightenment oi the people of Canada from printed sources is a vital force in the growth of the intelligence, character, economic advancement, and cultural life of the nation. An adequate supply oi books should be available to all citizens, whatever their geographical location or economic status.

In a review of Canadian trends for the *Wilson Library Bulletin* in November 1944, a Windsor librarian, Eleanor Barteaux, reiterated confidence in the beneficial association of books and democratic well-being that librarians were attempting to achieve.

Librarians know from past experience that when this war is over, there will be an abnormally large demand for library service of all kinds in all the provinces. Upon this postwar library, in a country where democracy is the way of life, must fall the task of providing the materials for continuing education and intellectual recreation for an enlightened citizenry.

In another booklet, *The Public Library* (1944) by Angus Mowat, the inspector of public libraries for Ontario, also outlined of a broader vision—the value of libraries to communities and organizations. By developing reliable resources for carrying on more active adult education programs with other agencies, public libraries could become "an essential sinew in the body of community life." He said,

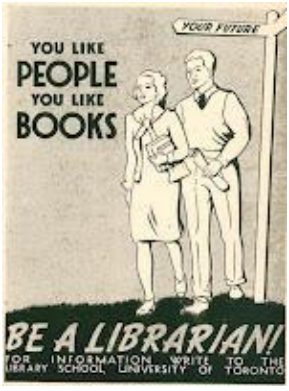
The free public library belongs to the community and it is supported by the community, just as the school, fire, and police services are supported. This is the normal and intelligent practice in a democracy. Not all libraries are successful but the free public library has an infinitely greater chance of success than has the association library.

Another cornerstone of the library faith came under scrutiny by John Grierson, the dynamic Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada from 1939–45. The NFB had produced a documentary, the *Library on Wheels*, in 1944, demonstrating how bookmobiles could serve twenty rural communities in the Fraser Valley region of British Columbia. In an address to American and

Canadian librarians at Buffalo in June 1946, Grierson warned, “the old library outlook is over and done with.” He challenged the primacy of the book and the passive role of simply circulating resources and dispensing information. He suggested librarians adopt new methods to spread popular education by reaching out to community organizations and being more proactive beyond the confines of library buildings.

I do not say that the day of the book is over, but the day of the book only is certainly over. It is not information that is needed today; in fact, it is not information that is sought. It is enlightenment, and that is a very different thing involving, as it does, the dramatic process of sparking the mind and the heart into new hope, new vision, new realization, and new efforts in citizenship. You can no longer think that the work is done if the information is made available or even conveyed. The work is not done until we spark the gap between the citizen and the world of his citizenship, bring into his imagination the great and beneficent struggle of man which we see today, and finally secure his creative participation in that struggle.

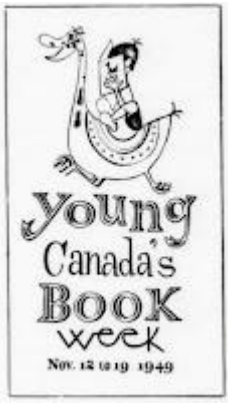
Writing in the *Canadian Forum* in July 1946, Nora Bateson, a champion for regional library development, argued for the need to employ modern methods of communication to reach rural communities, nonusers, and underserved groups. She reflected on the value of the older concept of using books to edify the public: *In less turbulent days it was another function of the library that was usually put first and it is still as important as it ever was: the enriching of individual lives in a thousand quiet ways. In literature, art, philosophy, science, history, many find their delight and refreshment. One of the more tangible effects of such reading is that it makes people live more fully, enables them to see more and deeper meaning in their own lives and experiences. And the largest possible number of fully developed individuals is the aim of any robust democracy.*



Library recruitment, 1945

As the national population grew and the pace of life picked up in postwar Canada, public libraries sought to expand their range of services. The establishment of new regional systems and library outreach were noticeable features. More effort was made to reach non-users (the majority) or underserved rural populations. Public relations, attendance at community events, in-house film festivals, park programs, partnerships with groups, work with hospitals, and delivery of books to people with disabilities. Libraries placed greater emphasis on language resources and sponsored classes for immigrants because ‘New Canadians’ sought assistance in their new homeland. The concept of the library as a major hub for

community activity beyond book lending was taking a firmer hold. It became a place where adults and children could discover books, films, radio programs, recordings, educational television broadcasts, or newspapers, thus satisfying their desire to learn. It was becoming in the popular parlance, a people place, and the University of Toronto created a recruitment poster with an expression that took hold: "You like people, you like books." In 1949, the Canadian Library Association (CLA) inaugurated Young Canada's Book Week to promote good reading, cultivate personal values, and introduce children to Canadian literary authors. The Book Week national campaign unabashedly aimed to inspire a love of reading by connecting children with authors and illustrators through communal events, such as essay and poster competitions.



In a conservative era, the older reliance on the enlightening power of books and the democratic theme retained some currency in library thinking. When the Canadian Library Association issued *Suggested Standards of Service for Public Libraries in Canada* in 1955, the National Librarian, William K. Lamb, introduced the guidelines using a familiar theme:

In the world in which we live, adequate library service is becoming more and more vital. Few institutions can make a greater contribution to democracy than an adequately staffed and equipped public library. It offers wide opportunities for general education, ready access to books expressing varied points of view on questions of the day, vocational help of many kinds, books on all sorts of hobbies and handicrafts, and a wide range of recreational reading. It can help to make our working hours more effective and successful, and to ensure that leisure time is passed in some pleasant and socially desirable way.

Nevertheless, the brief purpose statement in the 1955 standards did not reference a democratic theme. It relied on the utilitarian principle: "the basic purpose of public library service is to provide a sufficient number of books of quality, so housed and organized, and with their use so promoted, that they reach the greatest possible number of people, thus making their local contribution to the education and to the cultural growth of the community."

Informed Citizenship through Intellectual Freedom

Through the 1950s and 1960s, reliance on the efficacy of books diminished as it became evident that libraries were avoiding the selection of objectionable or controversial literature that some citizens would prefer to borrow or consult. In 1951, the newly formed OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee tendered a resolution, which was successfully passed at the general meeting, requesting that the CLA adopt a Canadian Library Bill of Rights that all Canadian libraries

might embrace. But the proposal was not acted upon: librarians were reluctant to investigate self-censorship in book selection. In principle, the CLA opposed official censorship. In April 1953, the association forwarded a brief to the Senate Special Committee studying 'salacious and indecent literature' criticizing the prohibitive government approach used to censor books. The prevailing attitude to book selection often crystallized around the mindset that the antidote for bad books was good book selection and the establishment of more libraries across the country to supply acceptable literature. The 1955 CLA Standards provided a succinct summary: "A high quality of book selection is assumed."

The practical matter of localized adult services and programs for groups resonated more strongly, driven by planned community needs and cooperation with other agencies. Librarians were more inclined to curtail interest in individual 'readers' advisory' work and emphasize literacy and basic lifelong adult education programming. The promotion of an enlightened citizenship and assistance in realizing democratic ideals was melded with more functional, systematic goals as specialized services developed. The formal expression of these trends appeared in the revised CLA standards of 1967, which provided an expanded statement for the purpose and objectives of a Canadian public library:

1. To provide opportunity and encouragement for continuous education for every individual in the community—children, young people, men and women.
2. Through guidance, stimulation, and communication of ideas, to promote an enlightened and enriched citizenry.
3. To assemble, preserve and administer in organized collections the library's print and non-print materials to support the educational, cultural and recreational program of the community.
4. To provide an accurate, reliable information service.
5. To support and co-operate with groups and organizations in the community in presenting educational and cultural programs.

But the most important change in library thinking for engaging an informed citizenry came with the CLA's adoption of a statement in support of intellectual freedom in 1966. There was growing realization that public libraries sometimes acted as an obstacle to free democratic debate and open expression of ideas precisely through the composition of collections and delivery of services. Canadian librarians had not been outspoken advocates in resisting censorship until they adopted the precept that access to the broadest range of ideas coupled with the rights of readers was essential in a democratic society: "Intellectual Freedom comprehends the right of every person (in the legal meaning of the term), subject to reasonable requirements of public order, to have access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual creativity, and to express his thoughts publicly."

For decades, Canadian librarians had been reluctant to uphold freedom of expression and thought formally. They adhered to restrictive 'community standards' and believed the perfunctory lending of good books and reliance on democratic rhetoric would suffice to improve society and validate the library's standing as a fundamental service. Intellectual freedom was a significant accomplishment of librarianship that marked a dramatic shift to linking libraries more closely to democratic freedom of expression, thought, and opinion by supporting the lawful diffusion of ideas and information without restriction. It had evolved in part from the beliefs associated with the concept of the 'library faith' but moved far beyond its simpler comforts. Into the 21st century, the contribution public libraries make to offer citizens access to all points of view continues to be considered a vital (but difficult to achieve) component in supporting and encouraging democracy.

My previous blogs are available on John Hallam and John Taylor.

The blog on the 1966 CLA intellectual freedom statement is at this link.

The blog on the 1933 *Libraries in Canada* commission is at this link.

My blog about the Canadian Library Council's Canada Needs Libraries (1945).

My blog on the issue to counter undesirable literature in postwar Canada is at this link.

Wednesday, October 08, 2025

Three Early Maritime Memorial Libraries at Dalhousie, Acadia, and Mount Allison

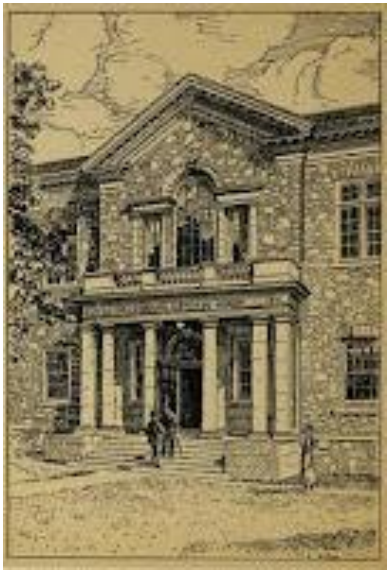
College and university education evolved slowly in the Canadian Maritime provinces before 1900. By the time of the First World War, Dalhousie was the most prominent university in the region. Established in Halifax in 1818, it began to expand after 1911 when it relocated to the more spacious Studley campus where much-needed new buildings could be constructed. By this time, two other smaller, distinguished liberal arts universities had also gained prominence: Acadia in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and Mount Allison in Sackville, New Brunswick. Acadia was established in 1838 and began to grow in the early 20th century. Mount Allison, founded in 1839, was noted for being the first university in the British Empire to award a bachelor's degree to a woman as early as 1875. Collections at all three institutions were relatively small. When James Bain reviewed library progress across Canada in 1895, he reported that Dalhousie (college) held 20,000 volumes, Mount Allison held 4,500 volumes, and Acadia held 3,850 volumes. Prior to 1914, the three institutions shared a common problem—there was no separate building for library purposes, although university officials and alumni alike acknowledged the necessity of erecting one.

The Macdonald Memorial Library, Dalhousie University, 1915

Macdonald Memorial Library sketch by Arthur Lismer, c.1918

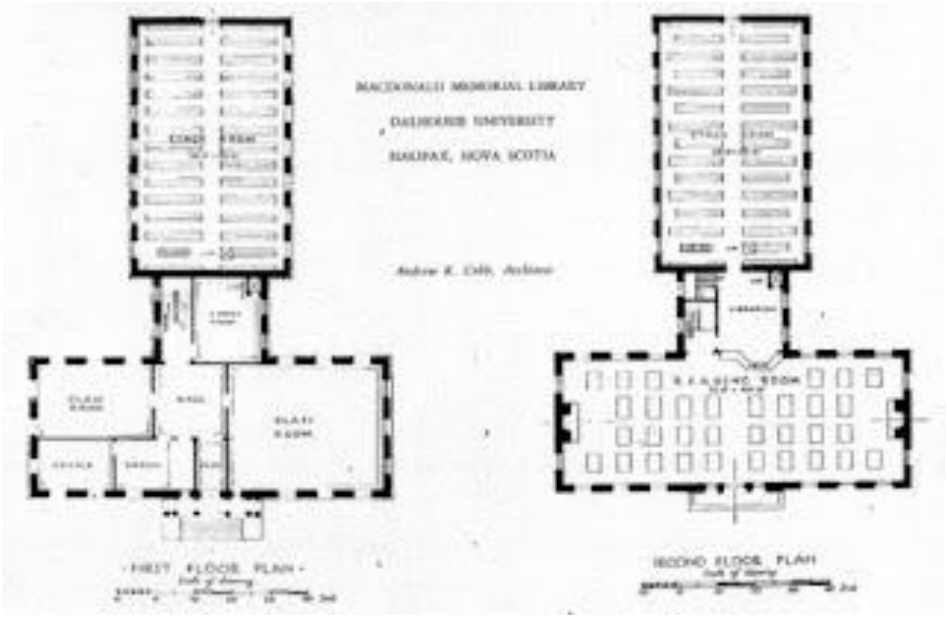
The largest university library building in the Maritimes in the first half of the 20th century was named for Charles MacDonald, a mathematics professor at

Dalhousie from 1864–1901. After he bequeathed the university $2000 to purchase library books, a memorial fund in his name had succeeded in raising this amount to $33,000 by 1905. Progress stalled at this point because no suitable location was available for constructing a library. But the acquisition of the Studley estate in 1911 cleared the way to proceed. Officials laid a cornerstone in the spring of 1914 and construction was completed by the fall of 1915. Andrew R. Cobb (1876–1943) of Halifax and Frank Darling (1850–1923) of Toronto, who served as consultant, were the design architects. Andrew Cobb would figure prominently in all three Maritime memorial libraries. The influence of the Georgian style is evident in the rectangular dimensions, columned portico, Palladian window, and classical exterior symmetry of Andrew Cobb's design. These exterior elements exhibited a heritage of order and balance rather than monumentality. The small building cost $90,000 and was ready for students by the summer of 1916. By necessity, the library contained only a few offices, limited work space for staff, and a reading room on the second floor. The catastrophic explosion of two ships in Halifax Harbour in December 1917 briefly damaged the reading room before its restoration.



In a unique (and fortuitous) circumstance in Canadian library history, Arthur Lismer, one of the distinguished Group of Seven artists, created three sketches of the Macdonald Library in 1918 for a publication to mark the centennial anniversary of the university, *One Hundred Years of Dalhousie, 1818-1918*. His sketches of the exterior, especially the columned portico entrance, highlighted the elegant stone facing that conveyed a rustic style, a feature of the Studley campus buildings that Frank Darling and Andrew Cobb designed. Local quarries provided the dark grey limestone for the library which featured a variety of encrusted red and brown salts that added colour and texture to the building. Two classrooms located in the entrance hallway on the first floor were used for teaching purposes. The attractive reading room on the second floor was almost 3,000 sq. ft. in size (90 ft. x 32 ft.) and featured fireplaces at each end. Bookcases along the wall held the reference collection. An office for the University Librarian, Archibald MacMeachen, was also located on the second floor. He wrote in the *Dalhousie Gazette* on October 27, 1915, that "No finer memorial for a college teacher can

be imagined than a building devoted generation after generation to the sacred work of teaching." Indeed, the building continued in use as the main library until its replacement by the Killam Library in 1971.

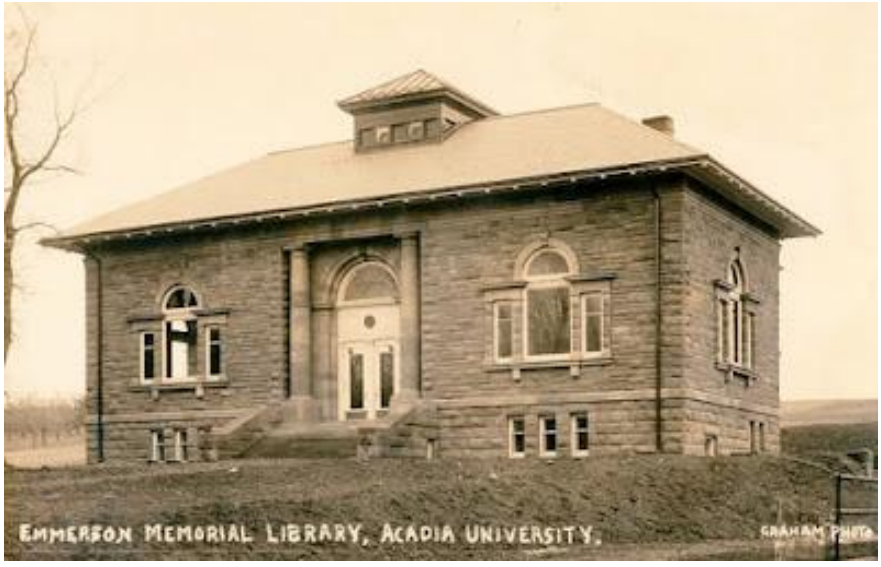


When the library first opened, only a small collection existed on site and a decision was made to recatalogue materials by using the Library of Congress system. It was not until 1921 that a five-storey expansion added book stacks to the rear on the north side. However, even this added shelving for 125,000 books was insufficient. As a consequence, scientific volumes were located in departmental libraries for chemistry, physics, and geology. When Philip Turner, a lecturer at McGill University, reviewed Canadian university libraries in 1931, he published updated floor plans for the library. At this time, Macdonald was a closed stack library, a typical arrangement in many instances. Two years later, in the national study, *Libraries in Canada*, headed by John Ridington, it was recorded that Dalhousie held some noteworthy special collections, especially the J. D. Logan Collection of Canadian literature, the Stewart Collection of Canadiana, and the Thompson Library of Dramatic Literature. By this time, the library was operating its popular Patterson Travelling Library service that

furnished small boxes of books for many Maritime communities, a service that continued until the mid-1950s.

There was a further addition to the building on the west side in 1956. This new wing was opened to alleviate space problems on a temporary basis: it housed the Kipling Room, a notable collection of Rudyard Kipling's works recently donated to the university. When the modern Killam Memorial Library opened in 1971, the older Macdonald Memorial Library continued to serve as a science library before its collection was relocated again. In the 1990s, the former stack rooms of the Macdonald Building were converted into administrative offices and the reading room was refitted as a meeting space for various events.

Emmerson Memorial Library, Acadia University, 1914



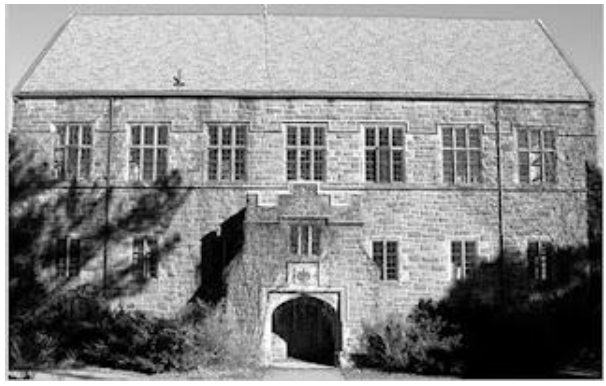
The Emmerson Memorial Library in Acadia University opened in 1914 and was formally dedicated in June 1915 by Charles H. Gould, McGill's University Librarian. The library, constructed with stone fashioned with brown and olive sandstone trim, was designed to accommodate 125,000 volumes in steel stacks. Designed by the architect Andrew Cobb from Halifax, the building was named for Rev. Robert H. Emmerson (1826–1857), an influential New Brunswick Baptist minister whose family donated $25,000 towards building a suitable memorial. Cobb planned Emmerson as a two-storey, stone building in the Italianate style featuring wide eaves supported by large brackets and a low-pitched hip roof topped with a small cupola. Two Doric columns flanked the entrance steps with a copper seal of the University crest embedded above the door surmounted by a stone transom and window. Large three-bay Palladian windows on each side allowed for exterior lighting to flood the interior.

The library featured comfortable reading rooms, study alcoves, areas for special collections and staff processing of materials. The collection of about 20,000 volumes was initially classified using the Dewey Decimal system and accessed through a dictionary catalogue. On Sundays, the reading room was given over to students to listen to and reflect on talks by professors. After the library officially opened, several special collections were acquired. A collection of Canadiana was purchased from Major J.P. Edwards in 1917, and the collection renamed in memory of Eric R. Dennis. Two other collections, the John D. Logan Collection of Canadian Literature and the William Inglis Morse Collection, followed. The Emmerson reading room was the site of a meeting in April 1918 leading to the creation of the first Maritime Library Association with a small membership.

Mary Kinley Ingraham joined Acadia in 1917 as the new chief librarian and remained until her retirement in 1944. During her distinguished tenure, Acadia's library underwent significant growth with expanded circulating holdings, special collections, and enhanced library services for students and faculty. In 1930 and 1931, Acadia operated two book trucks fitted out to carry about 1,500 books to numerous stations where exchanges could be made. However, financial constraints in the Great Depression ended the bookmobile service, although community groups continued to access books through loans of boxes.

With increasing enrollment and modernized library service in the 1960s, Acadia realized a new library building was necessary. Fortunately, a generous donation from Harold S. Vaughan began the planning process for a new library in memory of his son, Harold C. Vaughan. In 1965, the Vaughan Memorial Library opened and the aged Emmerson Library was converted into classrooms and offices for the School of Education in 1967, becoming known as the current Emmerson Hall.

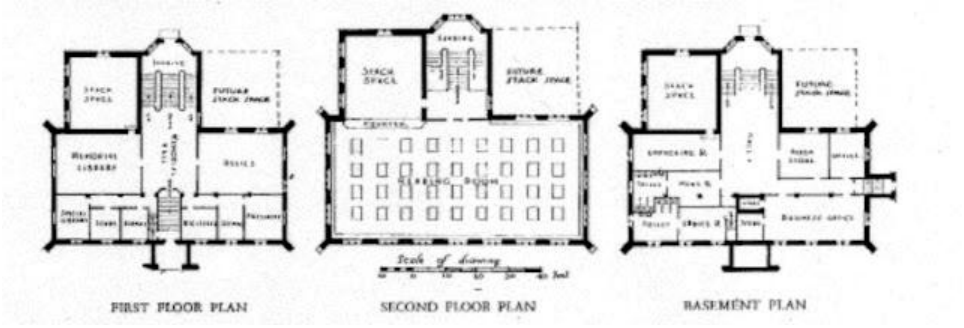
Mount Allison Memorial Library, 1927



Mount Allison Memorial Library, n.d.

A third memorial library opened in June 1927 at the Sackville, New Brunswick, campus of Mount Allison. It originally was proposed as a memorial to the Mount Allison students, faculty, and alumni who had died during the First World War, and as funds accumulated, construction began in 1926. Andrew Cobb reprised his earlier efforts as the building architect, and on this occasion he chose to display a three-storey Tudor revival style exterior. The building cost $110,000 and was designed to hold 60-70,000 volumes in the rear five-storey stack room with the potential for expansion. Red Sackville stone was employed for the outside, with Dorchester olive stone for the trimmings. The entrance doorway featured a notched roof porch that offered patrons the impression of a safe castle-like setting.

Astride the front entrance, the memorial hall exhibited plaques recording fallen university soldiers from the Great War. Additionally, two rooms were designated for historical records containing valuable documents, books and selected archives. A stack space was situated at the rear beside the main staircase. Small offices and study rooms were located towards the front facade. Of special note was the Mary Mellish Archibald Memorial collection featuring resources devoted to art, music, household science, and modern literature. The basement rooms contained a workroom, business office, unpacking room, lavatories, and stacks space. The second floor was dedicated to a large reading room (80 ft. x 36 ft.) flanked by wall shelving with seating accommodation for about 150 students. A catalogue was available, and a circulation control desk located at the back of the reading room.



At its opening, the library held about 15,000 books but the collection naturally grew in size until the stacks reached capacity. Even with the addition of an annex in 1960, student enrollment and university expansion required a new building. When the Ralph Pickard Bell Library opened in 1970, the Memorial Library was renovated to become the University Centre, a popular, functional student home for decades. However, following a controversial administrative decision, in 2011 the building was completely demolished to make way for a new state-of-the-art fine arts and performance facility. The original memorial tablet was reassigned to the main floor of the Wallace McCain Student Centre in 2008, together with

other tables listing casualties from other wars. Veterans Affairs Canada has a site displaying these plaques.

University Libraries and Memorialization

These three memorial libraries connect the enduring idea of the library as a meaningful tribute to deceased persons and families to a legacy of community and knowledge. Memorializing campus buildings such as libraries was a well-established practice in America and Britain long before its adoption in Canada. The earliest and foremost instance was the McGill University Library which opened in 1893; it was a gift of Peter and Grace Redpath and named accordingly. Universities were eager to preserve their history, achievements, and benefactors. Family members, too, believed memorialization provided a material way to acknowledge and commemorate loved ones. The symbolic linkage of a person's life in a shared library space provided a continuous tribute that informed and serviced students, faculty, and the university community. It was a tangible way to connect the university community with important people through shared experiences and legacies.

Mount Allison chose to commemorate soldiers lost in the Great War, 1914–18. Dalhousie and Acadia honoured individuals who had made significant contributions in education and religion. Individual and family donors combined with fundraising efforts and, eventually, institutional revenue, reflected the era of generosity Andrew Carnegie fostered in the public library sector during the first decades of the 20th century. While the former libraries are no longer part of contemporary Maritime or Canadian library activity or modern library networking, they marked the beginning of significant donations for university libraries and for memorial naming conventions that persisted across Canada in the 20th century. In that aspect, these libraries stand as historic memorials in their own right.

A Wikipedia article on the impressive career of Andrew R. Cobb is at this link.

My previous blog on Mary Kinley Ingraham is at this link.

An article with historical photographs of the Macdonald Library is at this link.

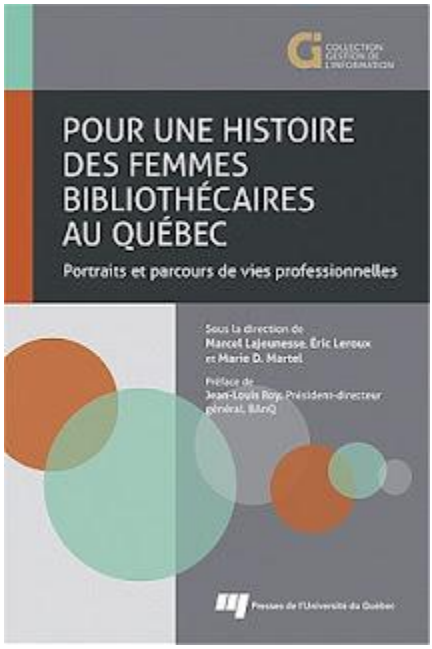
An Acadia article on the Emmerson Library is at this link.

A Mount Allison article on its memorial library is at this link.

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

Pour une histoire des femmes bibliothécaires au Québec (2020)

Pour une histoire des femmes bibliothécaires au Québec: Portraits et parcours de vies professionnelles edited by Marcel Lajeunesse, Éric Leroux and Marie D. Martel. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2020. xviii, 178 pp., illus.


POUR UNE HISTOIRE DES FEMMES BIBLIOTHÉCAIRES AU QUÉBEC
Portraits et parcours de vies professionnelles
Sous la direction de
Marcel Lajeunesse, Éric Leroux
et Marie D. Martel
Préface de
Jean-Louis Roy, Président-directeur général, BAnQ
Presses de l'Université du Québec

This book is a welcome and unusual addition to library shelves dedicated to Canadian librarianship. For too long, the role of women in the development of Canada's libraries was mostly overlooked. We now have a well documented history/biography of seven women who made significant contributions to the culture of Quebec and its librarianship. The three editors in charge of this collection are all associated with the École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information at the l'Université de Montréal. Marcel Lajeunesse is a librarian, professor, and Quebec historian who served as the director and professor at this school and has authored many articles and books on librarianship. A Wikipedia entry provides more information on his remarkable career. Professor Éric Leroux's interests include the history of libraries and librarians as well as the history of printing and the book trade. Professor Marie D. Martel's current research involves projects related to social media platforms such as Wikipedia. Together, they have gathered several authors to provide interesting and lengthy accounts of women who worked in different types of libraries before and after the 'Quiet Revolution' dramatically changed Quebec society and politics after 1960. It was after this time that women began to emerge in leadership positions and librarianship assumed more prominence in the social, intellectual and cultural life of Quebec. The different authors provide a chapter on each.

The role of women in the development of Canadian libraries has not been charted in detail, even though as early as 1921 Mabel B. Dunham, chief librarian at Kitchener Public Library, flagged librarianship as a profession for women in her presidential address to the Ontario Library Association. Only a few individual biographies have been published that outline their contributions and recognize

their leadership. The attainment of democratic freedoms by women in Quebec was a lengthy process spanning the years of first and second-wave feminism. A few highlights suffice to show that gender equality often lagged behind other provinces. In Quebec, it was not until 1940 that women gained the right to vote and be eligible as candidates in provincial elections. During the Quiet Revolution, the Civil Code of Quebec was amended to eliminate a wife's duty to obey her husband and to allow them to practise a profession different from their husband. Most importantly, in 1976, Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms was enacted which explicitly prohibited discrimination based on gender. Female librarians in other provincial jurisdictions also faced discriminatory challenges, but they were able to secure positions of leadership and advance their careers in greater numbers. The Introductory chapter summarizes the progress of women in Quebec librarianship and provides some interesting background for the individual studies that follow.

Éva Circé-Côté (1871–1949) leads the list of seven influential women who worked in Quebec libraries. Andrée Lévesque discusses her career as a journalist, writer, and librarian who became head librarian at Montreal's first public library, the Bibliothèque technique de Montréal, in 1903, only to be demoted in 1909. Perhaps her short-lived marriage to Pierre-Salomon Côté, her outspoken progressive viewpoints on social issues and feminism, or male prejudice led to this decision. After 1910, she became curator of the prestigious Philéas Gagnon collection of Canadian antiquarian books acquired by the city of Montréal. She classified and catalogued this collection, and, when it was transferred to the new Bibliothèque de la Ville de Montréal, she continued to work until her retirement in 1932. During this time, she continued to contribute literary and journalistic pieces that won her admiration from critics and friends alike.

Marcel Lajeunesse documents the career of **Mary Sollace Saxe** (1865–1942), chief librarian at the Westmount Public Library for three decades, by concluding that she possessed many qualities: a strong and creative personality, significant leadership, recognized political acumen, and a clear vision for the public library (p. 40). Some of her innovations included the introduction of reference service, the implementation of an open shelf system for the public, better children's services, and expanded library space. Mary Saxe also contributed articles and published *Our Little Quebec Cousin*, a children's book describing life in Quebec.

Marie-Claire Daveluy (1880–1968) was an author, historian, librarian, and library educator. Johanne Biron charts her extraordinary library career after obtaining a library diploma from McGill University when she became an assistant librarian at the Bibliothèque de la Ville de Montréal from 1920–43 and advanced to chief of cataloguing from 1930–41. Most importantly, in 1937, with Aegidius Fauteux, she founded the École de bibliothécaires at the Université de Montréal and served as an assistant director and professor for many years. In 1943 she participated in the formation of the Association canadienne des

bibliothèques d'institutions (now the Association pour l'avancement des sciences et techniques de la documentation, Asted). She was the first woman to be a member of the Historical Society of Montreal in 1917, and she was the author of popular children's works exemplified by *Les Aventures de Perrine et de Charlot* published in 1923. She was at the forefront of cultural life and was accorded many honours during her lifetime.

Hélène Grenier (1900–92) is best known for her work in Montreal school libraries and promotion of good reading for children. Éric Leroux provides an excellent account of her career, commencing with her work in 1926 at the Montreal Municipal Library alongside two notable colleagues, Éva Circé-Côté and Marie-Claire Daveluy. In 1931, she was hired by the Montreal Catholic School Commission, which operated both French and English-language schools, to establish a Teachers' Library. Then, from 1952–61, she was elevated to director of school libraries for the commission. In this capacity, she greatly expanded and improved elementary and secondary school libraries. During her tenure, 159 new libraries were established and 80% of Catholic schools had a library when she retired. A lifetime interest in music and cultural pursuits led to her nomination as an Officer of the prestigious Ordre national du Québec in 1988

Claude Bonnelly studies the career of **Céline Robitaille-Cartier** (1930–2017), who served as director of the Laval University Library from 1978–88. She was the first female director at Laval and worked to improve the standing of her staff and library services at the university. The author knew her personally and succeeded her as director upon her retirement. He credits her humanistic approach to management in a period when automation, networking, and the initial challenges of the information society loomed large.

Paule Rolland-Thomas (1929–2021) is the subject of a biography devoted to library education by Michèle Hudon. She joined the École de bibliothéconomie when it was established at the University of Montreal in 1961 and continued teaching, training librarians, and researching until her retirement in 1994. A notable achievement was her preparation of the French language first and second editions of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules published in 1973 and 1980. Her expertise in cataloguing, classification, bibliographic work, and subject access to resources made a significant contribution to librarianship in Quebec.

The closing chapter deals with two women, **Hélène Charbonneau** (1929–2021), a specialist in children's literature, and **Louise Guillemette-Labory** (b. 1953), who rose through the ranks to become the Associate Director of Libraries in the Culture Department of the city of Montreal. During her tenure, the network of public libraries in Montreal underwent various studies leading to the renovation, expansion, and construction of new libraries throughout the city. Hélène Charbonneau was head of children's work for the city of Montreal from 1972–79 before services for adults and children were combined, a typical realignment

across North American libraries. She continued to coordinate and advise until her retirement in 1992. Just this year, in 2025, the Bibliothèque Ahuntsic on the Island of Montreal, where she worked for two decades after receiving her library diploma in 1952, was renamed the Bibliothèque Hélène Charbonneau in her honour. Marie D. Martel writes about their successes, yet notes that female librarians often remain underrepresented in reference works, especially *Wikipedia*.

These portraits of female librarians remind us of the important contributions women have made, not just in librarianship, but in the history of social, intellectual, and cultural life in Quebec. As well, all the women were determined to overcome the issue of gender-based discrimination. While they belong to different generations, the 'glass ceiling' existed in various manifestations that hindered their advancement for many years. The case of Claire Godbout, who was 'bibliothécaire en chef' at Trois-Rivières, recalls the earlier fate of Éva Circé-Côté. Her position was abolished in 1956 so that a man with the title 'conservateur de bibliothèque' could be hired in her place. Godbout was demoted to head of cataloguing at a lesser salary and informed of the decision without any forewarning. Despite the combination of male chauvinism with social restrictions, female librarians in Quebec persevered in their pursuit of executive careers, cultural pursuits, and social justice. They succeeded because they were ambitious, strong-willed, and determined to be recognized in the library profession as it developed in Quebec, especially after the Second World War.

It is perhaps fitting in this review to recount that other women, born in Quebec, made contributions that transcended local, regional concerns. A few librarians who briefly appear in this volume, such as Alvine Bélisle and Laurette Toupin, are also deserving of similar detailed biographies. I could add other Quebec natives, such as: (1) Juliette Chabot (1902–87), who earned her BLS at McGill University and subsequently authored valuable works on librarianship; (2) Beatrice Simon (1899–94), for many years Assistant Librarian at McGill and very active in special library work (especially medical science); (3) Margaret Ridley Charlton (1858–1931), a pioneering medical librarian working in Montreal and Toronto who helped found the Medical Library Association in 1898 in the United States; and (4) Mariam H. Tees (b. 1923-), who was one of the first presidents of the Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec and who was inducted into the Special Libraries Hall of Fame in 1988 after a lengthy career at the Royal Bank headquarters in Montreal.

As an added highlight to the informative historical research each author provides, two notable features of this book are the portraits and bibliographies that appear with each chapter, thus providing images and entries that future researchers will find of considerable value.

Further information:

My blog on Marie-Claire Daveluy is at this link.

My blog on Mary Saxe is at this link.

My blog on Mabel Dunham's 1921 address to OLA delegates in Toronto about the role of women is at this link.

There are useful Wikipedia articles for Alvine Bélisle, Juliette Chabot, and Margaret Ridley Charleton.

Thursday, September 11, 2025

Contested Spaces: A Critical History of Canadian Public Libraries as Neutral Places, 1960–2020

Contested Spaces: A Critical History of Canadian Public Libraries as Neutral Places, 1960–2020 by Whitney Kemble. Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books & Library Juice Press, 2024.

Whitney Kemble, a librarian at the Scarborough Campus of the University of Toronto, has contributed an important work in the growing field of 'critical librarianship' about the contentious issue of 'library neutrality' in public library event bookings from 1960 to 2020. She has identified thirty-three controversial events held in Canadian public libraries using various resources, such as contemporary newspaper articles. Although eight gatherings were cancelled, the vast majority of events took place. There are too many episodes to discuss in this review; still, readers will likely remember more recent events, such as the 2017 cancellation by Ottawa Public Library of the controversial film, *Killing Europe*, which examined terrorist activities, street riots, a migrant crisis, and societal polarization. Another instance was Meghan Murphy's 2019 presentation on gender identity at Toronto Public Library's Palmerston branch, which sparked notable opposition from LGBTQ organizations. Her event did take place with protestors outside the branch and it highlighted different perspectives on TPL's adherence to intellectual freedom (IF). Older readers likely remember Mississauga's cancellation of its 1978 screening for the BBC film, The Naked Civil Servant, a depiction of a man's gay lifestyle that was 'ahead of its time,' at least for the library board that countermanded the original decision to hold the event.

What do we learn from all these Canadian experiences? Defining neutrality in a liberal democracy is difficult—in *Contested Spaces*, we find references to ideas like impartiality, absence of bias, equality or equity of treatment, tolerance, even-handedness, objectivity, and indifference. Since the 1960s, librarians have been particularly vocal about embracing neutrality or fostering social responsibility in

a community context. There is a tension in the neutrality-advocacy debate regarding librarian proactiveness rather than passivity or indifference on societal issues. The traditional stance supposes that the public library uncritically dispenses information or avoids inappropriate influence or improper advice. This philosophy was evident a century ago in March 1919 when George Locke, TPL's chief librarian, told the *Toronto Star,* "If people have enough intelligence to look on the two sides of the question they will have enough to know how to act, and our public libraries here teach this." But of course, on certain societal values, such as literacy, racism, poverty, social justice for disenfranchised minorities, and the very nature of democracy, libraries cannot be value-neutral. I believe attaining neutrality is a laudable goal, but an unattainable ideal.

Indeed, the author concludes that the stance of IF adopted by Canadian library associations since the 1960s can be problematic. This policy maintains the right to hold, receive, and disseminate all points of view without restrictions, but, as Kemble notes, "the values of safety, inclusion, and diversity regularly are trumped by the values of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression in libraries" (p. 130). For many librarians, a neutral stance is necessary to maintain IF because this enables individuals to form their own ideas. The author critiques the 'myth of neutrality' and questions the prioritization of IF above other library core values, for example, social justice or social responsibility. For her, "community, relationships, and protecting those who are most vulnerable are the values I prioritize personally..." (p. 138).

Although the author links main opposition to neutrality with the formation of the American Library Association (ALA) Social Responsibility Round Table (SRRT) in 1969, to be sure, library neutrality was an issue even before the ALA adopted its Bill of Rights in 1939. This pre-war bill emphasized unbiased book selection, a balanced collection, and the statement that "library meeting rooms should be available on equal terms to all groups." At the time, the ALA's short-lived Progressive Librarians' Council (est. 1939) opposed the concept of neutrality, a challenge renewed in the 1990s when the independent Progressive Librarians' Guild formed in the United States and opened chapters in Canada. To be truly progressive, one must believe in the need to redress social inequities and de-prioritize neutrality. Many American librarians believe the SRRT falls short in this regard because its voice is muted in a large bureaucratize organization devoted to many interests.

Also, concerning value-neutrality, it would have been helpful for Kemble to touch on the growing influence of the New Public Administration (NPA) theory that developed in the United States after the 1960s. Since this time, public managers in North America at all levels of government have given more emphasis to social equity alongside the more traditional concept of social

equality. Equity recognizes that different levels of support for persons or groups should be provided to achieve fairness in service outcomes. Equality seeks to treat people in the same way regarding opportunities or rights, with less regard for their needs or differences. The two ideas overlap, but there is a difference between practicing 'fairness' and 'sameness.' The NPA de-emphasized neutrality and stressed the ethical responsibility of public servants to stand against injustice and advocate for marginalized communities. Yet, this theory is rarely mentioned in the library literature.

Citizens' Forum discussion at LPL, 1945

Fittingly, in terms of social responsibility, Kemble begins her history with the London Public Library's 1960 decision to screen the American film*, Iron Curtain Lands*, in a park. London had been a leader in organizing and sponsoring events with groups since its new modernist-style library opened in 1941, featuring rooms and an auditorium for use by the public. Not surprisingly, at the height of the Cold War, some people objected to this post-Stalinist documentary. On this occasion, the event was postponed and rescheduled for viewing without further problems. The postwar era was an era of community-based groups and clubs devoted to photography, books, National Film Board viewings, citizens' forums, women, youth, music, fraternities or sororities, and a host of other local associations. Librarians were beginning to give more attention to community concerns rather than focusing on individuals.

However, the 1960s would introduce new social movements on a national and even international scale, focusing on nuclear disarmament, feminism, animal rights, environmental concerns, pro-life advocacy, civil rights, and bilingualism. These organizations formed local groups and emphasized contentious issues related to identity, human rights, free expression, and broader social problems, such as poverty. The tried-and-true adoption of neutrality allowed many

librarians to believe they were insulated from controversial subjects comparable to career public servants. But in April 1962, their reticence was called out by a keen observer, J. Bascom St. John, in the *Toronto Globe & Mail*: "They have a mistaken idea that professional ethics in the book field requires them to preserve a discreet silence, or at any rate, a virtual inaudibility. There are a few welcome exceptions to this generalization, but what librarians need more than anything else is a new concept of dignity. Dignity is not submission; it is pride. It is not a masterful withdrawal, it is an absolute determination to be heard and respected." It was in this societal environment that IF statements were finally adopted by library associations in Ontario (1963) and Canada (1966). These statements were primarily concerned with book selection and free expression, but the Canadian Library Association statement added the responsibility of libraries to facilitate "the right of expression by making available all facilities and services at their disposal." IF was a step towards librarians seeing themselves as part of a social process of educating citizens by offering a wider range of resources and views.

Contested Spaces charts various issues that have challenged or bedevilled library authorities across the country for more than half a century: anti-communism, LGBTQ rights, environmental activism, Indigenous identity, anti-Muslim prejudice, drag queen story times, and anti-vaccine protestations, to name a few. Statistics for the book's thirty-three events show that twenty-five events were allowed to proceed (76%), six events were cancelled by the library (18%), and two other events were dropped by the organizers (6%). The twenty-five events that were held usually embraced normative library statements upholding IF and library neutrality. The rationale for cancelled events also included the contravention of library anti-discrimination policy, security issues, or arguments related to unacceptable racial or controversial views, and hate speech.

In the case of the Mississauga 1978 film cancellation, the library responded by updating its policy on film selection and use. In 1990, Ottawa Public Library cancelled a lecture on reducing immigration and withdrawal of foreign aid because it was "inappropriate" (p. 14). The 2009 cancellation of events proposing to discuss assisted suicide in Vancouver was vetoed by the library because it received legal advice that it was a potential violation of the Criminal Code of Canada (p. 41–44). The public library in Saskatoon cancelled a speaker scheduled to speak on the matter of abortion due to its controversial nature, citing logistical safety concerns in 2017. The author notes this was an interesting decision because safety concerns trumped IF (p. 58). In

the 2017 case of *Killing Europe*, the Ottawa library cited its stance vis-à-vis its internal anti-discrimination policy. Eventually, legal challenges upheld the library's position because it was not legally obligated to protect IF when private events were held on its premises (p. 72). Although Vancouver originally approved Megan Murphy's session on gender identity and feminism for March 2020 based on IF and neutrality, her event was called off due to COVID-19 closures. In terms of politics, Kemble designates four of these library decisions as a progressive force and two as conservative reaction (Mississauga and Vancouver in 2009).

Contested Spaces closes by critiquing the reliance on the principle of IF and assertions of neutrality. Kemble believes that libraries too often reinforce the status quo of societal power imbalances by protecting 'ideas over people.' Although on occasion security and safety come to the fore in the decision-making process, too often values related to social justice are ignored or relegated to secondary consideration. This state of affairs does not fit with the author's concept of progressiveness or value-neutrality: in many instances, neutrality can be a malleable concept. Nonetheless, the concept of neutrality is still a recognized value in library work because it espouses tolerance and accommodation of people and groups with different ideas and goals.

Whitney Kemble's criticisms in her well-researched monograph stand out in a Canadian context and make us consider whether our current policies that uphold neutrality are adequate or a fruitless ethical search. Of course, progressiveness is not without its critics, but the author concludes that she is ready for these conversations (p. 39). Her publisher, Litwin Books & Library Juice, is known for its academic quality, and this book is a valuable addition to the debate on neutrality in a liberal democratic society, which no doubt will continue.

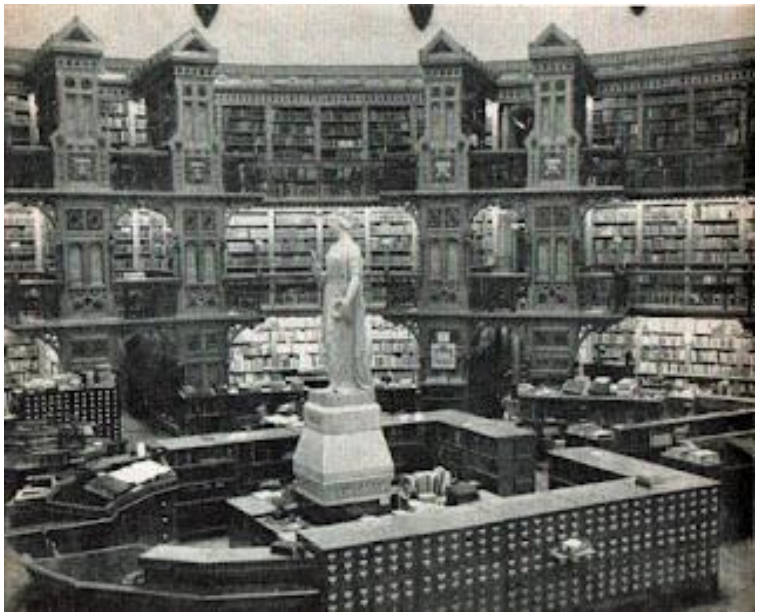
Additional sources:

My blog on the Canadian Library Association adoption of its intellectual freedom policy at Calgary in 1966 is at this link.

A YouTube video news report of the protest in support of the transgender community against controversial speaker Meghan Murphy's appearance at the Palmerston Branch is at this link.

Friday, August 08, 2025

Canadian Special Libraries Form a National Identity, 1945–1970



Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 1940s

In the spring of 1946, Elizabeth Homer Morton, the Secretary of the Canadian Library Council, recounted her observations on special library services to the Special Libraries Toronto Chapter. In the fall of 1945, she had travelled across Canada to personally assess library services. She visited a variety of special libraries: the Oakalla Prison Farm libraries in Burnaby, British Columbia; the library of the hospital ship *Lady Nelson* in Halifax Harbour; the Co-operative Wheat Pool libraries on the Prairies; and the extension work of Hudson's Bay House in Winnipeg to company posts. She concluded optimistically, "Library service in Canada owes a great debt to the special librarians past and present. Not content with building up their own collections, they have done much for Canada's education and information services by encouraging the institution of public library services." Indeed, more attention to special libraries due to the intensity of industry and research in the war years 1940–45 had given cause for optimism in the two Canadian chapters of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), in Montreal and Toronto. While government libraries, such as the

majestic Library of Parliament, comprised the majority of special libraries, smaller technical and business libraries were proving their worth. The 1948–50 Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS) reported 196 total libraries, an increase from 158 in its 1942–44 survey.

In the immediate postwar years, there were three centres of special library collective action: the two established chapters of the American SLA, and, in 1949, the Research Section of the Canadian Library Association. The latter national grouping served to address issues common to college, university, research, and special libraries, and to promote their interests. The primary focus on special library work was mostly the preserve of the two chapters, which sometimes worked with the New York Chapter of SLA to organize specific conferences devoted to special librarians. These two chapters focused on special librarians' identification of their profession and career. They fostered the development of group associations beyond their local areas and sought to clarify the role of special libraries. They ascertained collective needs and pursued goals to support members and engage with the public interest. Sharing best practices, advocating for libraries, networking with colleagues, and establishing standards of service promoted confidence within their parent organizations. Consequently, the two decades following 1950 eventually led to the decision to form the Canadian Association of Special Libraries and Information Services (CASLIS) in June 1969 as a constituent division of the Canadian Library Association (CLA).

Three Postwar Conferences, 1947–49

As a springboard to promote member involvement, three regional conferences were organized by the Toronto, Montreal, and Western New York SLA Chapters: one in Toronto on Oct. 17–18, 1947, another in Rochester on Oct. 8–9, 1948, and a third in Montreal on Sept. 23–24, 1949. Training for librarians and staff was the general focus of the first two meetings. At the King Edward Hotel in Toronto in 1947, two prominent voices, Winifred Barnstead, director of the University of Toronto Library School, and Edna Poole, longtime librarian of the Toronto Academy of Medicine, expressed the view that general university courses, not specific ones, constituted the best way for educators to advance special library work. Librarians should engage in continuing education efforts to further their careers. Beatrice Simon, from McGill University, outlined her view on the training requirements for medical, hospital, and nursing librarians. Mary Jane Henderson, the head of the Montreal Sun Life Assurance Co. library, spoke on training in the life insurance industry. A year later, at Rochester, Phyllis Foreman, librarian of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, spoke on training library assistants for circulation work and George Johnson, librarian of the Law Society of Upper Canada, addressed issues related to in-house 'sub-professional' training for the ordering of materials.

In Montreal, a new theme, communication and cooperation, formed the basis for discussion. The keynote speaker, W.K. Lamb, the Dominion Archivist, addressed the issue of creating a union catalogue for the proposed National Library at some length. It was an arduous task, but he felt special libraries could play a role in contributing to a union catalogue because "they can play a very important part. By your very name, you have specialized needs and unusual needs, and you have unusual material stored away in these libraries. I do not look upon the Union Catalogue as anything narrow." Lillian Steers, librarian of the Dept. of Mines and Resources, outlined cooperative efforts in Ottawa amongst libraries. Mildred Turnbull, librarian at the Royal Bank of Canada in Montreal, spoke on cooperation among different types of libraries in her city.

The three regional meetings were productive efforts to connect members with peers and complemented the annual summer postwar SLA conferences held in Boston, Chicago, Washington, and Atlantic City from 1946 to 1950. When the Toronto Chapter proposed to hold the conference, the SLA set a date of 1953. The Toronto group was growing in numbers and felt confident it could manage the task. By summer 1952, Toronto had formed a local Executive and committees under the capable and energetic chairmanship of Pauline Mary Hutchison, librarian of the Canada Life Assurance Co.

The Special Libraries Conference, Toronto, June 1953

Pauline Hutchison, c.1953

The 1953 Toronto conference, which took place at the Royal York Hotel for four days beginning on June 22nd, drew about 1,000 attendees from the United States and Canada. It was an opportunity to showcase American and Canadian library progress since the previous SLA meeting in Montreal in 1936. The April issue of *Special Libraries* had profiled libraries in Montreal and Toronto that SLA members could visit. A special four-day tour to Montreal and return to Toronto was offered for advance registrants. Toronto had a diverse array of library resources to explore, including the Academy of Medicine (the second-largest medical collection in Canada), libraries of the Ontario Legislature, the Osgoode Hall Law Society, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission, and the Royal Ontario Museum. Pauline Hutchison worked tirelessly to offer a blend of speakers for an informative (and entertaining) annual meeting. Canadian speakers provided a variety of interesting topics at the opening Monday session: Marian Thompson, from the Toronto Star Library, spoke about handling large files of pictures. Edna F. Hunt, assistant chief librarian at the National Research Library in Ottawa, explained new developments in inter-library loan activity. Two general fora on 'Canadian Resources' were held on Tuesday. Dr. Robert C. Wallace, the former Principal of

Queen's University, provided a comprehensive survey of Canadian scientific research. Resource extraction was the topic J. Gerald Godsoe, vice-president of the British American Oil Co. Ltd., summarized. Earl S. Neal, an Imperial Oil Co. director, provided a succinct account of oil exploration and the expansion of Canadian oil and gas markets. Later, at the SLA banquet on Wednesday evening, A. Davidson Dunton, Chairman of the CBC Board of Governors, entertained delegates about America's northern neighbour, even venturing to say that Canada would not be assimilated by America simply because it was different.

The Toronto SLA conference was a successful undertaking that highlighted growing expertise in special library work among Canadians. Pauline Hutchison, who garnered accolades for her work in Toronto and the SLA, would eventually be inducted into the SLA Hall of Fame, established in 1960. Peter C. Newman, an aspiring journalist with the *Financial Post* who covered the 1953 convention, wrote on June 27th, "Today, the business library is a common feature of almost every type of enterprise, with insurance companies, banks, public utilities, publishers, and manufacturers leading the parade. Trade associations, law firms and advertising adgencies are other important library operators." As careers developed, some special librarians were venturing into the field of Documentation, which explored new principles and techniques for information searching, storage, and retrieval. Documentalists emphasized subject knowledge and their expertise in harnessing information sources and the storage and retrieval systems required to access knowledge. Two years after the convention, at the 1955 Canadian Library Association conference in Saskatoon, Edna Hunt outlined documentation efforts at the National Research Council, the Defence Research Board, and the Aluminium Laboratories Ltd. in Kingston. She would continue to make significant library contributions, both nationally and internationally, and be a founding member of the Canadian Association for Information Science in 1970–71. Later, in 1958, at a Documentation Seminar held at McGill University, Rodolphe Lavergne, librarian at Canadair Ltd., delivered a summary on current special library applications of machines and documentation techniques in the Montreal area that indicated conventional library methods still prevailed. He would eventually become the head librarian of the École des Hautes Études commerciales de Montréal and teach at the McGill University library school. As Documentation evolved into Information Science in the 1960s, most librarians chose to remain in the library field rather than adopting a new profession.

Growth of Special Libraries and Professionalism

Throughout the fifties and sixties, there was sustained growth in the number of scientific, technical, medical, government, and business libraries (particularly company libraries) as well as librarianship. This expansion was due to the explosion of research that placed a greater emphasis on the acquisition of current periodicals or reports and the swift delivery of information. Western special

libraries were being established, especially in Alberta, for example, Imperial Oil (1950) and Shell Oil and British American Oil in 1954. Louise Lefebvre, the chief librarian at the Pulp & Paper Institute in Montreal, and one of the founders of the Quebec Library Association in 1932, signalled changing directions in her talk at CLA's 1957 conference in Victoria. To the question, what was a special library? she said, "The special library is, in short, a particularized information service, which correlates, interprets, and utilizes the material at hand for the constant use and benefit of the organization it serves." What about the special librarian? She said, "The Special Librarian of the future, the one for whom industry is already clamoring and ready to pay a high salary, is a specialist with a degree in library science and a reading knowledge, if possible, of languages such as French, German and even Russian. Such a combination of talents to-day is painfully scarce." In the same year, the Librarians Group of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada issued a statement criticizing the federal government's so-called 'improved' schedule of salaries and benefits for librarians after investigating its unfavourable comparison with those of other professions in the public service. Additionally, in 1956, another new section devoted to special interests formed in the CLA: the Canadian Music Library Association was organized as an official section to promote services in its field of librarianship at the annual meeting held in Niagara Falls with a membership of 35.

By the mid-1950s, there was a growing recognition for the need for professional qualifications, greater clarity of purpose regarding services, and more assertive action regarding working conditions. In fact, at the outset of 1959, the SLA revised its membership categories: new members in the active class would now have to hold a degree from a library school of recognized standing and have had three years of professional experience in a special library to qualify. The CLA Council followed suit in November 1959 when it adopted its position on a national standard for librarians: "No one will be recognized by the Canadian Library Association–Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques as a fully qualified professional librarian in Canada unless he holds the equivalent of the B.A. degree as granted in Canada plus proof of library training equivalent to that required for the Bachelor of Library Science degree (B.L.S.) in Canada or Master of Library Science degree (M.L.S.) in the United States of America." As the decade closed, in November 1959, the *Canadian Library Association Bulletin* featured the importance of special library work by devoting an entire issue to its progress.

Jack E. Brown, 1950s

This issue featured important collections from across the country, along with regional synopses. It also introduced new professionals, such as Jack E. Brown, the new chief librarian of the National Research Council. He would oversee a significant era as the library officially became the National Science Library in 1966 and then assist with the development a new building, the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), opened in 1974. He influenced the profession during the sixties and seventies with innovations such as the Canadian Selective Dissemination of Information service (CAN/SDI), a current awareness service for scientists and researchers based on centralized processing at the National Science Library (NSL) of scientific databases.

Striving for a National Focus

The 1960s witnessed a dramatic period of growth for special libraries of various types—those serving parent organizations (e.g., governments), libraries developed for specific subjects (e.g., films), or libraries organized to hold different formats (e.g., maps). According to the 1964 report of the DBS, there were 580 special libraries in 1961, and subsequent contemporary reports indicate that approximately 300 more libraries were established in the sixties. General categories of service included reference, user orientation, document delivery, information retrieval, bibliographic assistance, and current awareness. Across North America some special libraries were beginning to be known as "information centres" or "documentation centres," and librarians were starting to embrace new computerized technology to play a helpful role in a new era of information and knowledge. Local perspectives were lessening and libraries were expanding their range of services and clienteles. The NSL was leading the way in providing delivery of documents as well as information and translation services. The two Canadian chapters sought to enhance member involvement, refine leadership structures, and pursue broader goals and objectives. For example, the Toronto chapter investigated the extent of training in Canadian library schools and the value of continuing education opportunities in its schedule of 1963/64 workshops.

At the national level, two important studies touched on special library work in the early 1960s. Beatrice Simon, assistant chief librarian at McGill University, conducted a study of major universities, *Library Support of Medical Education and Research in Canada* (1964), that proposed a national program for improving

access to Canadian medical information resources, such as improved financial support and the establishment of a National Medical Bibliographic Centre and Information Service. A second report, *Science-Technology Literature Resources in Canada* by George S. Bonn, the science and technology chief at the New York Public Library, included universities and major research libraries. He recommended that the NSL in Ottawa serve as the central collection in science and technology, supporting and encouraging principal regional libraries to strengthen their collections and provide better service aided by special grants. Networking among libraries and the availability of computerized databases promised to greatly expand the range of information available to special libraries.

Librarians were rearranging professional connections and forming new groups to better address their concerns. In 1963, many university and college librarians formerly in the Research Section of CLA formed their own major association, the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries. Shortly after, this action prompted a name change to the CLA's Research and Special Libraries section. In 1962, a CLA Committee on Medical Science Libraries adopted its own constitution in Ottawa, hen later transitioned to a standing committee of the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges in 1967. In 1963, a group of Canadians in the American Association of Law Libraries successfully formed a national chapter affiliated with American Association of Law Libraries, the Canadian Association of Law Libraries, with Marianne Scott of McGill University as its first president. In June 1967, the Association of Canadian Map Libraries was established at the Public Archives of Canada as an entity separate from the CLA.

Mariam H. Tees, c.1975

At this point, in 1966, the Toronto and Montreal chapters of the SLA began discussing the need to form a larger Canadian organization to coordinate activity at the national level. According to contemporary accounts, there were approximately 750 special librarians in Canada by the late 1960s. They were members of various groups: just more than 300 were members of the CLA Research and Special Libraries Section, about 350 were CLA members, and the two Canadian chapters had fewer than 200 members each. The SLA continued to be a strong influence in Canada, and the Montreal chapter hosted its second SLA conference at the beginning of June 1969, with the theme 'Information Across Borders.' Miriam Tees, librarian of the Royal Bank of Canada, chaired the organizational committee. She was in charge of a library of 50,000 volumes and

800 periodical subscriptions and looked forward to library computerization to provide faster service to the company. One of the key moments of the conference was an address by Beryl Anderson on Canadian information resources. In her summary, she made an important point by stating that a strong national association could be an effective instrument for fostering greater integration into the national information network. As well, the SLA conferred its Professional Award upon Beatrice Simon, an important figure in special library work and the assistant university librarian at McGill between 1947–65. It was a successful conference that brought attention to Mariam Tees' remarkable abilities and eventually to her presidency of the SLA in 1975–76 when she assured the membership, "As we move further and further into the information era, people with our special training and knowledge become more essential than ever." A week after the Montreal SLA conference concluded, at St. John's, Newfoundland, members of the CLA Research and Special Libraries agreed to dissolve and begin preparations to form a new division within the CLA specifically for special libraries.

At the June 1970 CLA meeting in Hamilton, special librarians formally adopted a name change and a new constitution for the Canadian Association of Special Libraries and Information Services (CASLIS). This step constituted a significant milestone in establishing Canadian special librarians as a voice in national affairs within the CLA. The Canadian special libraries sector had grown in numbers and confidence in the sixties. Initial membership in CASLIS reached almost 300 at time when there were about 1,000 special libraries, almost half of which were government. However, in the 1970s, this category would grow in number and begin to coordinate its activities through formalized group associations at the federal and provincial levels. There was less concern for nationwide undertakings.

Bank of Montreal Library, Montreal, 1969

The general proliferation of library groups and the development of ‘type of library’ membership adopted for the five divisional groupings in the CLA by 1970 indicated that national concerns or projects for librarians were giving way to provincial, regional, local, and personal professional issues, especially continuing education to further careers. As well, the activities of international affiliations remained attractive: both SLA Canadian chapters continued their connection with the SLA after 1970. In 1971, the Canadian Music Library Association of the CLA dissolved and chose to affiliate with the International Music Library Association rather than CASLIS. Instead of charting national policies, CASLIS executives spent their energies recruiting and establishing chapters in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, and Edmonton during the 1970s. During this time, the new association and its member chapters participated in a variety of joint programs and workshops with other library and information science groups. It was the strength of the local chapters that heightened awareness of CASLIS for years to come.

My previous blog on the organization of special libraries in Montreal and Toronto by 1940 is at this link.

My previous blog on the 1936 SLA conference held in Montreal is at this link.

My biography of Jack Ernest Brown is at the Ex Libris Association website at this link.

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

Three 1950s Prairie University Libraries: Rutherford, Dafoe, and Murray Memorial

Before the Second World War, there was only one standalone university library building in the Canadian west. The University of British Columbia library opened in 1925 on the Point Grey campus in Vancouver under the direction of John Ridington. However, with the post-1945 increase in student numbers, which included returning war veterans, overcrowding in three Prairie universities led to development plans that included the transfer and consolidation of library collections from various academic buildings into a separate, central library structure. University collections had grown incrementally across each campus, and at mid-century, Manitoba held almost 250,000 volumes, Saskatchewan about 125,000, and Alberta almost 150,000. These were relatively large holdings in a Canadian context and were comparable to academic libraries of a similar size in Ontario, such as Queen's or Western, which had erected buildings in the interwar years, the Douglas (1924) and Lawson (1934) libraries. With the increasing pressure to develop research collections and upgrade library operations, the 1950s proved to be a busy decade for university construction across Canada marked by extensions to existing libraries and the opening of new ones.

Rutherford Memorial Library, University of Alberta, 1951

Rutherford Library, University of Alberta, 1951

Rutherford Memorial Library at the University of Alberta opened on May 15, 1951, after delays in planning and shortages of construction materials. The library was named after the former Premier of Alberta, Alexander Cameron Rutherford. It was designed by the firm Mathers and Haldenby of Toronto incorporating modified elements of the English Renaissance (also known as Georgian Revival) architectural style. This style is characterized by symmetrical lines, proportion, panel ceilings, and detailing such as window pediments, quoins, and elegant furnished interiors. Rutherford was a handsome four-storey structure of rose-colored brick with white limestone trim. The library's exterior styling blended seamlessly with older campus buildings, which featured the Collegiate Gothic style.

The chief librarian, Marjorie Sherlock (1945–55), who actively assisted with its planning, rightfully declared, "The Rutherford Library is a beautiful building." Indeed, Rutherford was an impressive and inviting environment for students and staff alike. The walls of the entrance halls and the main staircases were faced with polished Tyndall limestone from Manitoba and Italian marble. The staircases featured marble treads and risers, accompanied by stair rails and banisters of bronze. Painting, sculpture and art objects were an integral part of the building. The two-storey main reading room displayed oak panelling, Empire Green walls, dark walnut furniture, and red leather chairs. Its entrance was dominated by an extensive mural by Henry G. Glyde depicting his personal interpretation of Alberta's early 'pioneer' colonial history near Fort Edmonton, which critics now consider demeaning in its depiction of relations between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and traders.

Henry George Glyde mural, Alberta History, 1951

Although Rutherford's architectural style and interior decoration were retrospective, the design plans featured a relatively functional layout on each floor with separate areas and some modern features, such as an electric elevator that delivered books from the closed stacks to the main circulation desk for users. The entire design allowed for the centralization of collections, such as the law library on the first floor, and separate divisions for library services: acquisitions,

cataloguing, circulation control, and reference service. Marjorie Sherlock planned to reorganize the library classification using the Library of Congress system, and, for this purpose, she hired Bruce Braden Peel, who became the chief librarian after her marriage and retirement in 1955.

The chief librarian and university administrators were justly proud of the new library, which cost approximately $2,000,000 to provide about 85,000 sq. ft. on four floors. The lower level housed space for the university extension library, a reading room for applied science students, a projection room, a smoking room, and areas for staff. On the ground floor, there was a law library, a reserve reading room for 120 readers, and closed reserve stacks for about 10,000 volumes for study purposes. A reading room for medical students and a staff area for processing periodicals occupied the rest of the main floor space. The second floor offered a main reading room, seating for 240 students, and a small reference desk. This floor also housed the library catalogue and periodical collection. Because the main library stack areas were only open to teaching staff, graduate and honours students, requested books by the majority of users were issued in the central area at the main circulation desk. The top floor was primarily devoted to seminar and conference rooms.

Rutherford Library main delivery desk, second floor, c. 1951

Rutherford was an outstanding addition to the University of Alberta campus. But, like all libraries, over time, increasing collections, staffing, and university enrollment led to a decision about its future. Library expansion was required in Alberta, but university growth necessitated the construction of a new library, the D.E. Cameron Library, which opened in 1964. Rutherford was reorganized to provide a larger law library on the upper floor, an undergraduate library on the second floor, and more spaces for special collections, rare books, and government documents. There were further changes, of course, notably the addition of a free-standing library built adjacent to it in 1973, Rutherford North.

Half a century later, in 2025, a prominent feature of ‘Rutherford South’ (as the old library came to be known) is the Bruce Peel Special Collections. The 1951 Rutherford Library combined an engaging elegance with a utilitarian arrangement of rooms, enduring qualities which continue to fulfill the needs of Alberta’s students to this day.

University of Manitoba Library, 1953, the Elizabeth Dafoe Library

University of Manitoba Library, 1950s

When the University of Manitoba’s new campus library officially opened on September 26, 1953, it announced the arrival of Modernist architectural styling and functional planning for university libraries on the prairies. In place of the traditional collegiate-style campus buildings, the library featured an attractive exterior of Tyndall Stone, a cream coloured limestone from a Manitoba quarry, and floor-to-ceiling walls of glass. Elizabeth Dafoe, the chief librarian (1937–60), helped oversee the design and construction of the new library. When she wrote about plans for the library several years later, in 1959, she said: “Every library, however, has two large areas of service: first, Public Service (Circulation and Reference), and second, Technical Service (the acquisition and preparation of materials for use).” She believed the effectiveness of the first was dependent to a considerable degree on the efficiency of the second.

Further, “Because the funds for our disposal were insufficient to erect a building ample enough to serve the university adequately for many years to come, we knew that we must have as few permanent partitions as possible and that not only the stack rooms but other areas as well must be as flexible as seemed practicable. Free-standing stacks and stack partitions between some rooms seemed to be the

answer." Indeed, the new library, costing about $900,000, was not only economically practicable but also consolidated smaller collections from across the university, thus allowing for better student and faculty use. The south end of the building provided an exhibition space and a small 80-seat theatre for films.

The Buffalo Hunt Mural by William A. McCloy, 1953

The design architect for the library was David F. Thordarson, a young Manitoba graduate (1949) with a BA in Architecture. He had joined the Winnipeg firm, Green Blankstein Russell, which oversaw completion of the building and its Modernist rectilinear styling. The building prioritized functionality over ornamentation by utilizing glass partitions to accentuate the open floor plans and large windows that revealed interior functions from the outside. The entrance floor located at ground level featured an open lobby, a readers' lounge, an exhibition room, a theatre, a projection room, and a small kitchen for social events. One notable feature, a colourful, dreamlike mural by William Ashby McCloy, became a prominent feature at the front entrance: it depicted three flying bison, one of which was the Great Bull Bison with his head turned back to a flying hunter who was in rapid pursuit in the sky over the Red River.

The library proper spanned three floors (one below the entrance level) with separate areas for technical services, periodicals, and a bibliography room, as well as the special Icelandic collection with adjoining stack rooms. In sum, the small library was both graceful and functional, and readily accessible in the centre of campus. The main circulation desk was on the second floor, with the reserve reference desk downstairs. Honours students and graduates were assigned carrels on each of the three floors of stacks. Faculty researchers were provided with sixteen larger cubicles in a separate room. Library shelving held 160,000 volumes with special sections for maps, the valuable Icelandic collection and periodicals. Rare books were assigned their own room.

Elizabeth Dafoe plaque

On May 25, 1961, in recognition of Elizabeth Dafoe's long tenure, a plaque was unveiled to commemorate the renaming of the library in her honour. The former head librarian already had gained the respect of many people years before the new library opened. As the student paper, *The Manitoban*, expressed in March 1952: "One of the library's first requisites, then, is a librarian who is both patient with and interested in the students. We, at the university, are especially fortunate in having Miss Dafoe. For the library is of prime importance in the student's progress, and its management by a person who understands so well the needs of professor and student, cannot be too greatly emphasized." In time, as student numbers grew throughout the sixties, the library became overcrowded. Plans were made to enlarge it. Finally, after a quarter century, in 1978, an addition by Green Blankenstein Russell was made to the northwest section of the library.

Murray Memorial Library, University of Saskatchewan, 1956

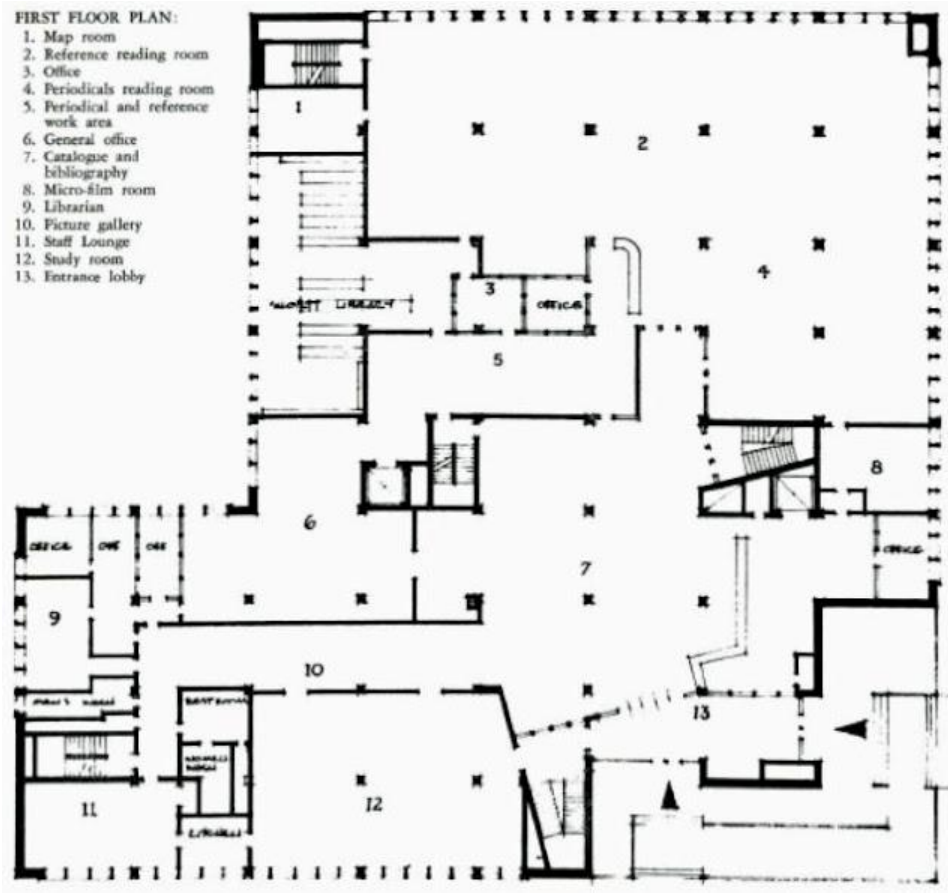
The third Prairie library, the Murray Memorial Library, named after the University's first president, Walter C. Murray, was built between 1954–56 at a cost of approximately $1,500,000, including furnishings and equipment. When it officially opened on November 30, 1956, the University President, Walter P. Thompson, declared it was "Another dream come true." The Murray Library was a central building designed to house many university collections previously dispersed among six branch libraries. The basic open design brought books and readers together in a close relationship.

Murray Memorial Library, Nov. 1956

The library was well-planned in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style by the architect, Henry Kenneth Black, from Regina, and the librarian David C. Appelt, a native New Zealander who had become the head librarian in 1946. Kiyoshi Izumi, a young aspiring architect, served as the Ken Black's representative and Keyes Metcalf, Director of University Libraries at Harvard, was a consultant on the project. Murray Memorial displayed an austere and unimposing rectangular exterior with a flat roof, uniform fenestration, and entry at grade level. Building materials included structural steel or reinforced concrete, granite at the entrance and Tyndall stone as a wall cladding and window trim.

It was also an unabashed modular building, displaying a significant interior change in planning for Canadian academic libraries. In modular planning the floor space is divided into equal rectangles: the Murray library was designed on 4 ft. x 6 in. scheme to accommodate its approximately 100,000 sq. ft. on four floors. This scheme enabled adequate floor-loading capacities, uniform ceiling heights, and provided for mechanical and electrical systems for air and lighting. Although the new building style lacked visual appeal, indeed it could be said to be boring, both H.K. Black and D.C. Appelt recognized that the international-style structure was well-suited to functional library requirements, future reorganization, and expansion. It was economical too.

Early decisions made in the planning stage determined the layout for Murray Memorial:
1. It would have open stack access with circulation control at the building exit.
2. Closed reserve collections would continue.
3. There would be no subject divisions.
4. Branch libraries would continue on a reduced scale. Research materials (except for Medicine) would be in the main library.
5. The Provincial Saskatchewan Archives would be located on the lower level.
6. There would be temporary space for the College of Law and the Law Library on the second floor.



Murray Memorial Library first floor plan, entrance at right

On the first floor, the circulation desk was situated at the entrance/exit with the catalogue adjacent to it. Further into the interior was a large, readily accessible reference room which featured a service desk that provided improved assistance. Book stacks were located on the second and third floors. The reserve reading room was on the lower level. The Murray Memorial Library served the university for two decades before undergoing extensive renovation in the 1970s during which a six-floor south wing was added to accommodate growth.

Seven decades later, in the 21st century 'information age' and the era of the 'digital library,' the services of the Rutherford, Dafoe, and Murray libraries continue to satisfy campus needs and exemplify the diverse choices librarians and architects made in the 1950s to address contemporary issues with flexible building designs that successfully transitioned to the future.

Further Reading:

My earlier blog on Elizabeth Dafoe is at this link.

Elizabeth Dafoe, "A University Library [Manitoba]." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 36, no. 4 (1959): 106.

Bruce Braden Peel's 1979 history of the University of Alberta is available at the Internet Archive.

Edith Park, "The Rutherford Library" 1951 alumni history at the University of Alberta.

David Appelt's report on planning for the Murray Memorial Library: "University of Saskatchewan Library, Saskatoon," is in *Proceedings of the Meetings at Midwinter ALA Conference, Chicago, Illinois, February 1 and 2, 1953*, ed. by Donald C. Davidson. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1953, pp. 8–18.

Tuesday, July 15, 2025

Marion Elizabeth Gilroy (1912–1981)

Marion Gilroy, BA portrait, 1932

Marion Gilroy began a promising academic career at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia during the 1930s. With the benefit of a Carnegie Fellowship award for a proposed study of adult education in the Halifax area in 1938, she earned a library degree at Columbia University. Then she returned to her native province to assume the task of directing the War Services Libraries in the Atlantic Defence Area for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Merchant Marine. After the end of the Second World War, in 1946, she became the supervisor of regional public libraries in Saskatchewan with the responsibility of promoting them across extensive rural areas populated by small towns and rural farms. Her initial energy and enthusiasm led to the creation of the North Central Regional Library in the Prince Albert-Melfort area in 1950.

Through the fifties, Gilroy helped North Central develop as a model aided by the establishment of a Provincial Library in 1953 to expand extension work, especially travelling library service and a regional bookmobile. Despite the fierce independence of local communities, she continued to promote the regional concept with numerous local organizations and municipalities. She was somewhat successful in west-central Saskatchewan, where the Wheatland Regional Library eventually formed in 1967. As well, the initial stirrings of regional work in the southeast would lead to the formation of the Southeast Regional Library in 1965. However, these events did not occur until after Gilroy had left public library work in Saskatchewan.

For almost two decades, Marion Gilroy was a tireless promoter of regional systems. In 1959, the Canadian Department of Northern Affairs requested her assistance to survey library conditions and needs in the Northwest Territories. Gilroy characteristically responded by citing the need for a regional approach: “A regional library service for the Northwest Territories should be free to borrowers, flexible and geared to meet the needs of all the people of the north. It must not stop at providing materials to meet the demands of readers at all levels; it should actively stimulate and promote reading, listening and discussion. A public library system should work in close co-operation with all educational agencies including

schools and school libraries with programs concerned with health, welfare, social and economic well-being, as well as with community organizations. Radio can help. A library on wings would be an asset…" (Marion Gilroy, Down and Up North, 1960).

Gilroy's academic career resumed after she completed graduate studies in librarianship at the University of Chicago in 1959 and resigned her supervisory position in the Provincial Library in 1963 to accept a teaching position as an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia School of Librarianship. After her retirement in 1978 and death in 1981, the Regional Library headquarters in Prince Albert was named in her honour in 1985.

I originally posted this biographical synopsis for the Ex Libris Association in 2019. The post also continues on the current ELA website. Marion Gilroy's image is her graduate BA portrait that appeared in the Acadia University Yearbook, *The Axe*, in 1932.

Marion Elizabeth Gilroy

b. 20 Aug. 1912, Spring Hill, NS; d. 21 June 1981, Vancouver, BC

Education:

1932 BA Acadia University
1933 MA University of Toronto
1939 BS in LS Columbia University (Carnegie Fellowship program)
1959 MLS University of Chicago

Positions:

1933–1940 Research Librarian, Public Archives of Nova Scotia
1940–1946 Acting Director, Nova Scotia Regional Library Commission and Director, Atlantic Command Library
1946–1963 Supervisor, Regional Libraries of Saskatchewan
1963–1978 Associate Professor, University of British Columbia School of Librarianship

Publications

Gilroy, Marion (1933). The Loyalist experiment in New Brunswick. MA thesis, University of Toronto.

Gilroy, Marion (1933). "The partition of Nova Scotia,1784." Canadian Historical Review. 14 (4): 375.

Gilroy, Marion (1936). “Customs fees in Nova Scotia.” Canadian Historical Review. 7(1): 9–22.

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Gilroy, Marion (1937). Loyalists and land settlement in Nova Scotia. A list compiled by Marion Gilroy under the direction of D.C. Harvey. Halifax: Published by the authority of the Board of Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

Gilroy, Marion, comp. (1938a) A catalogue of maps, plans and charts in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Compiled under the direction of D.C. Harvey, Archivist. Halifax, N.S.

Gilroy, Marion (1938b). “The imperial customs establishment in Nova Scotia, 1825–1855.” Canadian Historical Review. 19 (3): 277–291.

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Gilroy, Marion (1956). “Nora Bateson.” Food for Thought 16 (6): 242–244.

Gilroy, Marion (1960). “Down and Up North.” Food for Thought 20 (6): 276–281, 290.

Gilroy, Marion (1960). “With Parka and Sleeping Bag.” American Library Association 54 (4): 294–299.

Gilroy, Marion (1960). Library co-operation in Britain, 1950–1958. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association.

Gilroy, Marion (1963). Libraries in the Western Part of the Island of Montreal: Present and Proposed; a Report for the West Island Regional Library Council. Montreal: s..n.

Gilroy, Marion (1964). “Cat’s Cradles to Tractors; Books and Libraries for the Northwest Territories.” Canadian Geographical Journal 69 (6): 198–201.

Gilroy, Marion (1966). “Sights and Insights: Jokkmok to Yerevan. British Columbia Library Quarterly 29 (April): 8–13.

Gilroy, Marion and Samuel Rothstein, eds. (1970). As we remember it: interviews with pioneering librarians of British Columbia. Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Librarianship with the cooperation and assistance of the Library Development Commission of British Columbia.

Gilroy, Marion (1968). “Regional Libraries in Retrospect, 1927-1967.” In Librarianship in Canada, 1946–1967; Essays in Honour of Elizabeth Homer Morton ed. by Bruce Baden Peel, 58–72. Victoria: Canadian Library Association.

Gilroy, Marion (1979). Pioneers! O pioneers: the genesis of regional libraries. [Regina]: Saskatchewan Library Association.

Associations/Committees:

Maritime Library Association; President, 1941–45
Saskatchewan Library Association, President, 1948–49
Canadian Library Association; President, 1951–52

Other Activities:

Marion Gilroy “performed surveys of library needs across Canada, in regions as diverse Montreal Island and the Northwest Territories. She also hosted many radio and television broadcasts and had a stint as a movie star in the National Film Board production, Books for Beaver River.” During her teaching at UBC [University of British Columbia] she taught courses in public libraries, school libraries, readers services and book selection. In later years she traveled to exotic places including Russia and the Canadian North.
— Celebrating Women’s Achievements

One of the individuals to whom the Saskatchewan of today owes a great debt of gratitude is often referred to as “the small woman in the big hat driving the big

black van." Her name was Marion Gilroy, and her accomplishments are nothing short of heroic.
— Verne Clemence, Saskatchewan's Own, 2004

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Sunday, June 22, 2025

Education for School Librarianship Workshop, Jasper Park, Alberta, 1968

Education for School Librarianship in Canada; Proceedings of a Workshop, Jasper Park Lodge, Alberta on Saturday, 8 June 1968. Sponsored by the Canadian School Library Association, Alberta School Library Council, and Saskatchewan Association of School Librarians. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1970. 69 p.

During the affluent 1960s, most new school buildings included a library resource centre, a term that referred to a service focusing on multimedia resources. Renovations and expansions of existing buildings modernized school libraries with enlarged, better equipped centralized spaces and resources. It was era of progress. Schools were employing multimedia resources at both elementary and secondary levels, increasing budgets for printed resources, and improving training for professional, para-professional and clerical staff to provide services to students and teachers. In 1967, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported there were 16.3 million books in 5,188 centralized libraries compared to 4.3 million in 1,613 libraries in 1960. During the same period, the proportion of students with libraries almost doubled from 24.6% to 46.9% but there were still 2,794.9 million students without centralized libraries in 1967. Many students found the use of new audio-visual resources and techniques to be more immediate and more effective than books and periodicals. At the same time, educators began to use the terminology ‘learning resource centre’ in place of the school library.

Although there was progress in forming and staffing school libraries and learning resource centres with teacher-librarians (T-Ls), surveys indicate there were insufficient T-Ls who held a BLS or who had taken courses in school

librarianship offered by a library school or by provincial departments of education. In 1960, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported 155 professional librarians (persons with a library science degree) in schools with 281 trained teachers either with some library qualifications or none. By 1967, the Bureau reported 365 professionals (Ontario did not report) and 1,124 trained teachers. Library educators disagreed on the need for a library degree and provincial departmental courses often were limited to small enrollments and conducted during the summer at irregular intervals. The result was limited library training in schools and a tendency to promote the teaching of library-related content by classroom visits or individual sessions with students.

At the outset of the 1960s, printed materials in school libraries were often regarded as an auxiliary to independent learning rather than a valued asset that directly supported the school curriculum. Classroom visits by high school students to the library were often under the direction of an English teacher and instruction in library skills was limited due to lack of dedicated staffing. Although student instruction in library methods and the promotion of good reading continued to be staples in the broader philosophy of school librarianship, the decade also was a time of innovation. Leonard Freiser, the Chief Librarian for the Toronto Board of Education, established an Education Centre Library to order, catalogue and process resources as well as provide information searches and document delivery for teachers and librarians. He reported more than 25,000 requests were received during one year, 1967. His critics countered that the school library ought to teach students to think critically and provide them with the skills to achieve their own self-directed learning. Beyond the school library, many new ideas infused Canadian education: collaborative student work in activity-based group work, greater attention to mathematics and science, encouragement of new technologies and resources in classrooms, more advanced qualifications for entry into teachers' colleges or university faculties of education, open space designs for classrooms, and student demands for more practical knowledge reflecting a multicultural society.

In recognition of the need for guidance, the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) formulated its *Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools* in 1967. The standards stressed the need for an effective school library program developed collaboratively, citing three principles: (1) the provision of in-depth materials for learning following curriculum outlines, (2) each pupil should have access to a variety of materials regardless of school enrollment, and (3) each school must provide required learning materials regardless of its size. The librarian's functions were outlined as building and organizing collections of instructional materials, assisting teachers and pupils to maximize their use of resources, training and directing clerical and student assistants, and using public relations to maintain a vital library program. The CSLA standards applied to schools of varying sizes but were not mandatory. One forceful criticism was the lack of attention to the acquisition, organization, and distribution of media

resources because printed holdings were a primary concern. The standards seemed to be a retrospective vision to some professionals. Although the standards encouraged the integration of print and non-print resources, some educators believed specialist training for non-book materials was a reason for separating the school library from the media centre. When the standards were issued, many educationists hoped that every school would have a library and a trained librarian to operate it.

The Jasper Park Workshop on Education for School Librarianship, June 8, 1968

It was in this context that the CSLA examined the state of school library education in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Association of School Librarians and the Alberta School Library Council. This meeting attracted 300 educators and librarians from across Canada. The one-day session aimed to air differing viewpoints on three major issues central to school librarianship and provide attendees with future directions. Given the circumstances of changing school priorities in forming and using libraries, the discussions focused on three topics: (1) the role of the library technician in the school library, (2) the integration of new media in the school library, and (3) the status of the school librarian as a teacher. Several informative background papers describing Canadian programs for educating school librarians (printed with the workshop proceedings) appeared in *Moccasin Telegraph*, the newsletter of the CSLA, prior to the workshop.

The keynote speaker was Frances Henne, School of Library Service at Columbia University. She was well qualified to speak to the theme issues. As far back as 1945 she had helped formulate standards for the American Library Association (ALA) publication *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow*. She was particularly interested in researching and teaching programs for children and young adults in public libraries and schools. Now, in the late 1960s, as she approached retirement, she was closely involved in the development of revised American guidelines, *Standards for School Media Programs*, to be published later in 1969. In her opening address, Dr. Henne expanded on the new directions that standards were slated to introduce. New ALA terminology, such as media center, media specialist, or instructional materials center, signalled the importance of non-book formats in school programs. The new standards stressed the role of the media specialist in helping students develop competence in listening, viewing, and reading skills. Media specialists should work cooperatively with teachers in designing learning activities that use a variety of formats in classrooms. Nevertheless, she concluded with a spirited message by returning to the library's time-honoured potential: "That seemingly static space in the architect's blueprint is alive with its tremendous actuality and potentiality ... To each young person, the responses are manifold, not only in shared, already

experienced beliefs, but also in the opening, exciting vistas of the unknown." (p. 6)

The first panel discussed the role library technicians and support staff might undertake in schools. The emerging classes of library technicians from recently formed community colleges—about 400 graduates—drew the attention of three panelists. There were concerns about their role in media instruction and the possibility that they might displace librarians. June Munro, the Supervisor of Extension Services in the Ontario Provincia1 Library Service, believed there was no doubt about the value of technicians in school libraries, especially in district or regional centres where they could be integrated with other library personnel. Two other panelists noted that school boards were already employing teacher aides in classrooms, and it seemed technicians would fall into a similar category in provincial educational hierarchies. They agreed that school library supervisors should clarify the difference between technical and professional services and notify administrators in their districts.

A variety of instructional media, such as films, videos, audio recordings, slides, and filmstrips, presented opportunities to support educational programs. The second panel addressed problems associated with the purchase, organization, storage, and distribution of these formats. Helen Donaldson, a long-time school librarian and a supervisor for school libraries in East York (Toronto), emphasized the need to have "integration of management and also materials [so] that we can improve the library resource centre service to both pupils and teachers and in this way become a strong educational force in up-grading the quality of the educational program." (p. 21) Media required a variety of specially trained staff, of which the librarian was only one. Clearly, it seemed media specialists should be working as part of a teaching team in schools. It was felt that media resources should be as accessible as possible and placed in classrooms, laboratories, or special learning centres where they would receive maximum use. A central school library was just one possibility.

The third panel discussed "Teacher and Library Education in School Librarianship: Professional Dualism or Schizophrenia." Panelists felt the fundamental role of the school librarian should be to work with teachers as team members directly involved in the education of students. But, was teacher training and certification necessary for the school librarian with library school standing? Lawrence Wiedrick, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, who had extensive prior experience as a T-L, held that preparation in both education and librarianship was essential but that the emphasis in the workplace depended on local circumstances. He believed "more graduate programs in school libraries are required because extensive specialization at the undergraduate level is not desirable or usually possible ... programs should be offered by both colleges of education and library schools in order that candidates can choose a specialty within either field." (p. 31) Another panelist pointed to a

more proactive role: “School librarians are part of the educational team. They don’t serve teachers—they work with them as colleagues.” (p. 37) Generally, panelists agreed that the school librarian should be prepared first for professional teaching, which involved certification, and only secondly as a specialist.

The one-day workshop finished late in the afternoon with a summary by Frances Henne. Her thoughts, as before, emphasized that the functions of technicians should be clearly defined, that schools required staff with varying specialties, and that the school librarian could be a teacher closely involved in curriculum planning and the learning process. A systems approach, rather than independent schools, was needed to maximize the use of resources. The school library had a function of its own and therefore should play an essential part in making its voice heard in decisions about library/media administration.

Afterwards: School Librarians and a New Professional Model

The 1968 Jasper workshop was designed to allow educators to hear various opinions about the changing priorities in traditional school library service and the newer instructional media centres that were progressing. No recommendations were brought forward but the general discussions and background papers sharpened participants’ views and suggested options that might be useful. In the following year, June 1969, at the Canadian Library Association (CLA) national meeting in St. John’s, Newfoundland, CSLA arranged to have Jean E. Lowrie, the former President of the American Association of School Libraries (1963–64) and future President of the ALA in 1973–74 speak to school librarians about the role of the administrator in media centres. She was an advocate for school libraries fulfilling an instructional role with all types of media that was responsive and creative to the needs of teachers and students**.** Yet there was a growing realization that a significant number of Canadian schools were unable to meet the CSLA 1967 standards for personnel or facilities, although many came closer to meeting the collection guidelines.

In terms of clarifying roles, the CLA approved a statement, “Guidelines for the Training of Library Technicians,” in 1973. In the mid-1970s, the CSLA and the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada collaborated on an integrated definition of the role of the school library in providing all types of learning materials. The resulting publication, *Resource Services for Canadian Schools* (1977), presented national guidelines for resource centre services for the learning resource teacher and T-Ls. This publication superseded the 1967 CSLA standards and provided more guidance on media integration, district services, information access, programming and personnel rather than focusing on measures of materials and their arrangement.

Library education, too, continued to evolve. By the late 1970s, the worthy philosophy that the T-L was a cooperative planner and joint implementer of curriculum was at a youthful stage. As a model, the enhanced role proposed that T-Ls should actively participate with teachers in the planning and implementing of classroom units of study utilizing their knowledge of resources. This fundamental shift meant that library skills could be developed in jointly planned and implemented classroom learning exercises rather than scheduled class visits to the library.

Elizabeth Gardens Public School library, Burlington, Ontario, c. 1970

In 1979, the CSLA issued "The Qualifications of School Librarians;" it reflected philosophic educational changes. This statement recommended that a teaching certificate and successful classroom teaching experience were prerequisites for entry into a school library program and that programs should only be offered at the graduate or post-baccalaureate level. Qualified school librarians were tasked with competencies in areas such as professional leadership, acquisition, organization and use of learning resources, instructional design, and production of learning resources. It was an ambitious change for school librarianship.

Although there were pressures on funding for school libraries during a period of decreasing enrollment, economic recession, and rapid inflation in the 1970s, expenditures on books and media remained an integral component of school budgeting. A decade later, in 1979, Statistics Canada reported that school libraries held 49,547,798 books and 5,824,726 non-print audio-visual formats. Growth was slower but continued—in 1967/68 schools had reported holdings of 16 million books (there were no comparable data for non-print materials). Personnel increases were less impressive: in 1967/68 there were 2,975 full-time staff (566 with a library degree); in 1979 there were 5,171 personnel (451 with a library degree). Educational opportunities for T-Ls had led to 3,390 professional positions, i.e., teachers with certificates in school librarianship/media services but no library degree, teachers with courses in school librarianship/media services

but without a certificate, teachers without courses in school librarianship/media services, and audiovisual specialists with university degree but no teaching degree or certificate.

But a number of factors would eventually contribute to a slower growth of a larger national cohort of better trained T-Ls: (1) provincial education regulations did not insist that qualified T-Ls staff school libraries; (2) teachers found it more challenging to enroll in the revised three or four semester MLS programs after library schools eliminated the older two semester BLS program; (3) many T-Ls felt the usual three session program of university faculties of education leading to specialist qualifications in school librarianship should be bolstered with additional courses. Furthermore, individual library school course options tended to emphasize literature and reading for children or young adults as well as general school library administration. The faculties of education provided more specific courses that emphasized the role of T-Ls in media and curriculum development but did not develop comprehensive programs of study about school libraries.

The Jasper workshop occurred just before the significant shift in thinking about the role of the T-L and the school library. The 1980s would prove to be even more challenging than the clarification of roles in the 1970s, which remained to be universally recognized in educational hierarchies. Educational programs were usually planned and approved at various levels by administrators and elected officials who were often unaware of the school library's potential or what was happening in them, thus perpetuating the subordinate profile of school librarianship in the development of school curricula in many school jurisdictions across the country.

Further Reading

A biography of Frances Henne is at Wikipedia and one f Jean E. Lowrie is also at Wikipedia.

A national meeting on school librarianship at Edmonton in 1959 is the subject of my earlier blog.

Thursday, May 22, 2025

From Sigmund Samuel to the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, 1954–1973

Over the course of twenty years, in the 1950s and 1960s, libraries at the University of Toronto continued to expand and improve as they became collectively the most extensive university holdings in Canada. The library system, under the leadership of Robert Blackburn, also refined its philosophy concerning the necessity for a centralized research collection that could serve the needs of graduate studies. During this period, the architectural styles of the Modern Movement and new technologies of construction utilizing steel, glass, and concrete also broke with past practices. In 1954, the Sigmund Samuel Library (SSL) was constructed using Queenston limestone adjacent to the original library building with the Samuel family crest above the entrance. The coat of arms in stained glass above the entrance had been granted to the Samuel family by Oliver Cromwell in 1670. When the John P. Robarts Research Library was completed in 1973, the humanities and social science collection was transferred to the new building. The original building became the Science and Medicine Library and host of Canada's largest academic science and medicine library.

If the sleek rectilinear lines, large airy windows, open main floor plan, and simple functionality of the International Style in architecture exhibited by the SSL comforted people along with Samuel family coat of arms over the doorway, the opposite was true when the massive 14-storey John P. Robarts Research Library with two basement levels opened at 130 St. George Street. At the time, it was about one million sq. ft. in size and the largest academic library building in the world. It could accommodate four thousand users and held just under three million volumes. While its scale was breathtaking, its poured concrete Brutalist style, provincial funding, and original plans for restricted stack access provoked controversy before and after the opening of 'Fort Book.'

The Sigmund Samuel Library, 1953–54

When Toronto's first standalone Romanesque style University Library opened in 1892, it was designed to seat 200 readers and accommodate 120,000 books. It offered reference for students and lending privileges for faculty. Over decades, it became crowded, and by the late 1920s, the chief librarian, W. Stewart Wallace, planned for an extension; however, depression era financial difficulties and the Second World War halted progress. As collections grew, the smaller college libraries slowly expanded due to limited space in the central library.

Sigmund Samuel wing, c.1955

Finally, in 1951, Sigmund Samuel, a prominent Toronto business leader and philanthropist, promised a donation of $500,000 towards construction of a $3,000,000 extension. Sigmund was the son of Lewis Samuel, a very early Jewish immigrant to Canada from England. Sigmund was born in Toronto in 1867 and the family was quite prominent both in the Jewish community and the city of Toronto. His father, Lewis, was President of the Toronto Mechanics' Institute in 1879.

Construction on the new wing began in late 1953. This addition became an attractive five-storey 'wing' extension, a popular concept in academic library buildings after WWII. The circulation, reference, and periodicals departments were on the main floor with the humanities and social sciences book stacks in the three basement levels. The acquisitions and cataloguing departments were located on the second above ground floor. When W.S. Wallace decided to retire in spring 1954, the reserve book room inside the SSL was renamed in his honour and Alice Moulton, an experienced circulation librarian, placed in charge. A formal opening took place on November 26, 1954, with Sigmund Samuel and the architect Alvan Mathers of Mathers & Haldenby on hand in recognition of their contributions to the much needed project.

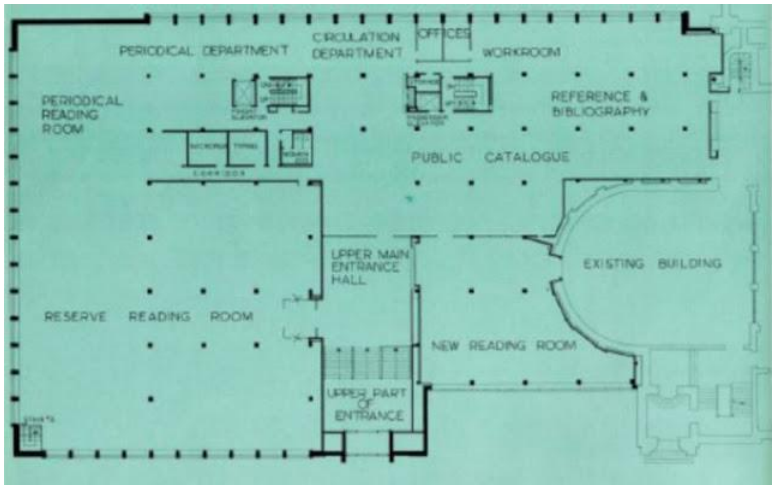
Sigmund Samuel and Alan Mathers at the opening

The next day, a colloquium on the future prospects of research libraries was held featuring W.S. Wallace, William Kaye Lamb, and notable librarians from the United States. A pamphlet, *The Research Library*, reporting the proceedings was published by the Canadian Library Association in 1955. The colloquium stressed the need to organize specialized collections and develop effective systems of nationwide cooperation, especially by the nascent National Library. Generally, students welcomed the new facility. *The Varsity* (March 9, 1955) reported, "The new library has many popular features: the open-shelf system, the attractive appearance, the good lighting (which incidentally promotes social life, as you can now see the student across the table from you). There is still some dissatisfaction, however — students have been petitioning to have closing time extended from 10.00 to 11.00." The large windows that allowed ample lighting were particularly popular.

The SSL was designed to make about one million volumes available for users. It also became a vital social centre for seminars, talks, receptions, student sales, elections, a faculty reading area, a staff room, and even a small smoking room. The Stewart Wallace Room was organized to hold 20,000 volumes and accommodated 380 users. It was often filled to capacity at critical times for student paper deadlines or examinations. When its open shelves were closed due to $8,000 book theft reported by the *Globe and Mail* on December 9, 1959 ("Students Petition for Return of Open-Shelf Library"), leaving students to fill in request slips to obtain books, they unsuccessfully petitioned the library to rescind its policy. However, unrest continued until 1961, when they were permitted access if they attended an instructional session.

Robert Blackburn's history, *Evolution of the Heart* (1989), provides a chapter on the genesis, design phase, and construction of the SSL. Although the extension provided necessary relief for collections and reader space, in fact, after a few years, the new wing itself became crowded. Administrators realized larger quarters would be necessary. The only major campus library built after the SSL was the E.J. Pratt Library at Victoria College, which opened in 1961. It was a plain, two-storey, granite-clad edifice with open stacks and extensive windows allowing students to view attractive landscaping. Consequently, planning for this

necessity began in the late 1950s, especially when Claude T. Bissell, a promoter of libraries, became President of the University in 1958. He quickly formed an advisory committee for future library services and buildings chaired by Roland McLaughlin to recommend new directions for the entire university library system.



Sigmund Samuel Library first floor plan

The McLaughlin Committee report issued in January 1959. It recommended that a policy of centralization of departmental libraries be pursued to coordinate services, that the Library of Congress classification be adopted, that a union catalogue of holdings be established, and that 75,000 sq. ft. be added to the present SSL and another 82,700 square feet erected on the site of the Engineering Building on King's College Circle. For future expansion, an additional 60,000 sq. ft. would be necessary. With the study completed, another committee was established to report on a new central facility, but not until 1965, with the full support of Claude Bissell, were plans recommended by the committee approved. There was an air of optimism about the project. When Claude Bissell spoke at the annual meeting of the Canadian Library Association held in Toronto in June 1965, he articulated the role of the projected research library: "The profile of the new research library in the university is that of an active scholarly headquarters with a close working relationship between professional supervisors and users. It will be a much more lively, much more heavily populated building than the old library." His focus was upon the humanities and social sciences and a new library of about 500,000 sq. ft. that the second committee had settled on. In the intervening five years, it was assumed that resources would be moved from the crowded SSL to the new central library. The SSL would continue with a duplicate collection for undergraduates and they would not have direct access to the collections of the new building. During the time the second committee did its work, important issues were raised in a national study by Edwin Williams, *Resources of Canadian University Libraries*. It reported the need for increased

financial support for research collections, especially at the graduate level. Also, the block of land at the corner of St. George and Harbord Streets was chosen as a new site for a grand central library. In 1966, after publication of the Spinks Report on the development of graduate education in Ontario, the Provincial government indicated that it could help finance the research library project. This report recommended that Toronto be designated as the major provincial resource centre and its holdings be available to all faculty and qualified graduate students. As such, the Province should support Toronto's expansion to assume these new responsibilities.

The John P. Robarts Research Library, 1968–73

With the University's acceptance of the 1965 report, serious design planning and preliminary engineering reports began and were finished in early 1967. A triangular building with fourteen levels above ground and two below was proposed. The main service floor was situated on the fourth level with circulation to closed stacks, reference, a public catalogue, and periodicals reading area. Access to two smaller wings, one for rare books and one for the library school, allowed access to these satellite areas. The budget had ballooned to just under $42 million, a phenomenal amount for a Canadian university library devoted to the humanities and social sciences, but the Ontario government authorized $40 million in support, which cleared the way for construction to begin at the end of 1968. In July 1971, the University Board of Governors named the main library in honour of John Parmenter Robarts, the seventeenth Premier of Ontario, 1961–71.

Robarts Library with the Rare Book wing, 1974

The eight-storey 100,000 sq. ft. wing for the School of Library Science was the first completed section of the library complex and was occupied in June 1971. It was renamed the Claude T. Bissell building in 1984, which became the home to the Faculty of Information.

The rare book wing, which featured a warm, inviting interior, opened in December 1972 and was named the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library in honour of Thomas Fisher, whose grandsons donated valuable collections of Shakespeare and other authors to the university library. Selected campus collections, staff, and services moved into the Robarts Library during the first part of 1973. The library quietly opened in July. Alice Moulton, who had become head of circulation of library systems in the 1960s, supervised the move of books from the SSL to the new building.

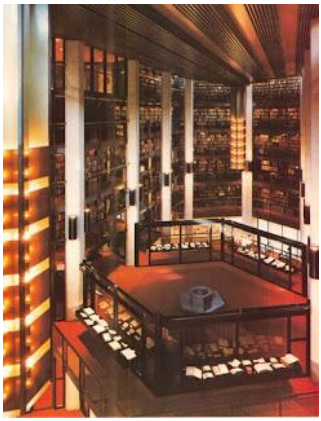
The monumental scale of the concrete complex dwarfed previous library quarters and offered the prospect of vastly better quality and quantity of services. But it did not come without controversy. The initial decision to limit access to collections for undergraduates, except for fourth-year students, provoked widespread student protests at a time when the concepts of 'student power' and 'stakeholders' were prompting student activism. In early March 1972, the University Senate rejected student appeals to allow all students and the public complete access to the building, its services and collections. Shortly afterwards, police removed and arrested 18 people, mainly students, at a sit-in in Simcoe Hall on King's College Circle, a short distance from the SSL. A lengthy *Globe and Mail* article on March 13 called attention to the issues: "Brutal tactics claimed: 18 charged as police end sit-in over U of T library." By the end of March, limited access was struck down: the Senate proposed that all University members would be eligible to use the Robarts Library and apply for entry to the book stacks. In 1972, there were more than 55,000 thousand potential users. Later, when a newly structured Governing Council officially came into being in July 1972 to replace the previous Board of Governors and University Senate, it adopted this principle.

Harsh commentary turned to the monumental design of Robarts, a feature many early century Carnegie libraries had suffered with for decades. Although the use of unpainted concrete in large buildings was not unusual in Canada in this period, the magnitude of Robarts startled many observers. In "Fort Book: It's 14 storeys of literary intimidation," an article in the *Toronto Star* on Sept 28, 1974, the journalist Robert Fulford declared, "the John P. Robarts Research Library is just about the most intimidating building ever devised by the mind of man." Many people—architects, passersby, and students— hated the library. Nonetheless, Fulford had to admit it worked with the proviso,

But the fact is that since the Robarts opened, library use on campus—borrowing, reading in the library, etc.—has increased almost 100 per cent. This means that the old facilities of the Sigmund Samuel Library were overcrowded, that new facilities were needed, and that to some extent Robarts has filled the need. Students may write nasty articles about it in The Varsity, the student daily, but they use it.

One of the more loquacious student critics of *The Varsity* was Linda McQuiag, who opined in its pages from time to time. On November 26, 1972 ("Take a Good Look before Books Go"), she reported that the book move from the SSL to Robarts would likely disenfranchise undergrads who would be denied access to resources they previously had. She also raised the issue of the enormous percentage of tax funding by Ontario taxpayers and the use of it by researchers from other universities. Later, she revisited funding issues when she reported in the *Globe and Mail* on July 10, 1973 ("Robarts Library: lavish but Book-poor") about library budget woes, inflation, and expenditures reductions that might have been trimmed costs during the construction stage, such as posh lounges in the library science wing or the front tower that made the entire structure look like a turkey (or peacock) from the Harbord Street side. Perhaps there was no formal opening of Robarts with ribbon cutting, etc., because of the controversies surrounding the library structure, its use, and its purpose.

From Sigmund Samuel to Robarts



Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, c. 1975

In retrospect, the two libraries reflected the changing fortunes of 20th century Canadian post-secondary education and the growth of Toronto. The SSL was built when universities developed with modest financial revenues and smaller enrollments that denied the bold planning strokes that Robarts ostentatiously displayed. The dramatic expansion of universities and new colleges in the 1960s was due to a vast infusion of federal and provincial funding necessary to meet rapidly increasing student numbers and to develop comprehensive research resources. The Sigmund Samuel and Robarts libraries celebrated the humanities and social sciences, but gradually, the SSL and its aged partner, the University Library of 1892, transitioned to a science and health complex sketchily outlined in the McLaughlin report. Eventually, in 1997, these two libraries were renamed the Gerstein Science Information Centre to denote a large donation from the Frank Gerstein Charitable Foundation. The SSL undergraduate humanities and social sciences materials were integrated into other campus library collections, and the reading areas expanded to accommodate science students and faculty. The Wallace Room continued with study carrels, tables for reading, and computer work stations. The Robarts Library grew in stature and became a world-class research institution.

As the city of Toronto grew from a regional hub to Canada's metropolitan centre, the Brutalist Style was often evident in public buildings. The striking impression of this style symbolized a utilitarian approach to building, permanence, and a

new expressive form for public gatherings. Concrete was a reliable, economical material used in other ambitious contemporary buildings which featured Brutalist elements, such as the York University central Scott Library (opened in 1971), Four Seasons Sheraton Hotel (opened 1972), and the CN Tower (opened 1976). Today, many people still consider the Robarts complex ugly, except for a short time in spring when the blossoms of its cherry trees planted in 2005 are in season.

A University of Toronto celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Robarts is at this link.

My blog on the reports by Edwin Williams and Robert B. Downs is at this link.

A short biography of Alice Moulton is at the Ex Libris Association at this link.

A biography of Robert H. Blackburn is at the Ex Libris Association at this link.

Friday, May 09, 2025

An Ontario Bookmobile Film: *The Books Drive On*, 1948

The Books Drive On. 16 mm film, colour and sound, 1948. Produced by Jean and Glen Eckmier, photography by Bob Henry and script by Tom Rafferty from CKNX radio.

Ontario libraries were late adopters of motorized bookmobile service. In the 19th century travelling library service by agencies in the UK and USA were innovative extension ideas to reach readers in unserved areas. In Canada, travelling libraries, boxes of books usually shipped to local communities or schools, were introduced first in British Columbia in 1898 by E.O.S, Scholefield, the Provincial Librarian and Archivist.

In 1899, McGill University began serving areas in rural Quebec thanks to the sponsorship of Hugh McLennan. The Ontario Department of Education began its service to northern lumber camps in 1901. These systems proved to be so popular that they were expanded and continued for more than half a century before they were discontinued.

Canadian Bookmobiles Begin Operating from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coasts

The first Canadian motorized bookmobiles, which contemporaries often called book vans, book trucks, or libraries-on-wheels, appeared in the Maritimes and British Columbia as early as 1930. In two summers, 1930 and 1931, Acadia University operated two bookmobiles, one in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia and the other in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Each modified book truck carried 1,500 books and visited station stops eight times during the summer. Unfortunately, worsening economic conditions at the outset of the Great Depression forced the termination of this service.

In the Fraser Valley, B.C., the Carnegie Corporation sponsored a regional library demonstration commencing in late summer 1930 that included a bookmobile service. It proved to be highly successful under the direction of notable librarians, Helen Gordon Stewart, the director and the assistant, Nora Bateson, who later championed regional services in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island before 1939.

In Ontario, regional library systems developed slowly on a county basis. The improvement of transportation routes in the 1920s and 1930s provided the opportunity to deliver book collections more easily and rapidly via motorized vehicles. The Ontario Department of Highways financed the growth of a provincial highway network assisted by the Good Roads Association based in municipalities and counties. Major highway construction and secondary roads facilitated commercial truck traffic, inter-city bus lines, and private automobile travel. The formation of county library associations in the 1930s and then county library co-operatives after the Second World War occurred mostly in southwestern Ontario. By 1935, Lambton County trustees introduced a small two-wheeled trailer (the 'book van' at left) with built-in shelving towed by a vehicle. Middlesex County began operating a small cabin-style book trailer carrying 1,200 books in 1940. These were not motorized bookmobiles and wartime rationing on gasoline and rubber halted further progress by county library associations until after 1945.

The Huron County Bookmobile

The Huron County Library Association was formed in 1941. Sixteen participating libraries agreed to pay an annual fee of $25 to share books transported by car on a rotating basis. In 1945, Mrs. Jean Eckmier became the county librarian and her husband, Glen, was hired as her assistant. For a few years they delivered books using their own car, but in 1947, the Huron County Library Cooperative purchased an imported American van adapted to bookmobile standards and nicknamed "Miss Huron" for just over $3000. It was the first driven bookmobile in Ontario, an International Harvester one-ton metro van, a type frequently used to deliver milk and bakery items to homes across North America after WW II. The body was built over the engine, thus giving more room for about 1,000 books. This compact model bookmobile was used to supply each participating library with 100 books on a quarterly rotating basis.

Angus Mowat, the Inspector of Public Libraries for the Ontario Department of Education, rode in the vehicle for two days in September 1947 and made a lengthy report with interesting observations in his notebook (pp. 513–514), which now resides at the D.B. Weldon Library at the Western University. A few of his excerpts follow:

The cab is built over [the] engine, thus allowing extra space in [the] rear. Front doors slide and driver's seat sets forward, giving wide entrance.
Truck is very easily handled and can turn in short space. Headroom 5' 7." Width of floor between shelving 4' 8." Shelves 8' long, six shelves high, house approximately 1000 [books]. Shelving is of wood made locally, and each edge has a 3/4" lip to keep books on. A hinged lip would be better, making it easier to remove the books when in action. Light by day is from the large windshield and windows in [the] rear doors. At night there is only a single dome lamp. Maybe they'll need more.
The general appearance of the vehicle is good. It is pained in a dark green, picked out by a lighter stripe.
Everything about the vehicle gives an impression of solidity and strength. It sides evenly and even though we went off on one or two quite rough detours the books did not offer to budge. I think, however, that dust may prove to be something of a problem. There will be heater and de-froster in winter.
Wherever we went on the two days I was out on exchange the van caused considerable interest, at least among the library people and small boys. In fact, on two occasions the small boys promptly invited themselves aboard and selected some of the books they wanted the librarian to take out.
I was surprised to see how quickly the exchanges were made [deposits and returns of 100 books per library]. The shortest one was 35 minutes and the

longest about one hour. This is about twice as quickly as exchanges were made when trays were carried in a passenger automobile.

The Inspector also penned a short article about his ride through the farm fields and small county towns in the November 1947 issue of the *Ontario Library Review* with an enthusiastic comment, "The librarian didn't sing, but I did."

Late in 1947, the county library trustees and county council authorized the production of a 16 mm film featuring the new bookmobile and the work of Jean and Glen Eckmier with a grant from the county council. The energetic couple took charge of the entire production and enlisted the help of Tom Rafferty of the Wingham radio station, CKNX (known as the Farm Station), to compose the script and to provide its commentary. Bob Henry did the colour photography and Wilford T. Cruickshank, a previous library trustee and owner of CKNX, assisted in production. Shooting began in November 1947 and finished several months later in August 1948. During filming, Stanley Beacock, the chief librarian in Lambton County, drove Miss Huron to the Canadian Library Association gathering in Ottawa in June 1948 for a special session on transportation in regional and county work. The Huron bookmobile was one of three prominent exhibits at the conference.

This 'amateur' film was not remarkably different from other bookmobile motion pictures that featured visits to readers at stations and small libraries. Still, it had a quality of highlighting the rural features of Huron County—the dusty streets of small hamlets, busy street front stores, livestock, field crops, farm machinery, children, adults and seniors gathering their books, greenery and trees along county roadways, attractive streets of the county seat, Goderich, the sleekly designed bookmobile with its gold trimmed lettering, and the sunset at the end of the day. Libraries were popular throughout Huron and there were five existing Carnegie buildings: Brussels, Clinton, Exeter, Goderich, and Seaforth. Other libraries were located in smaller communities, such as Auburn, Bayfield, Blyth, Dungannon, Hensall, and Kirkton, as well as township schools. During its initial years, the film grew in popularity. The National Film Board contributed $2500 to purchase a negative print. Later, *The Books Drive On* was advertised for sale in the *Library Journal* and the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. By 1951, the film had been exhibited across Canada and the United States and had left a lasting impression of county library work in a rural setting.

County library bookmobiles appeared across rural Ontario during the 1950s: in Simcoe, Lambton, Middlesex, Peel, Kent, and other cooperative systems. These mobile units primarily refreshed collections in small local libraries and schools from a central county headquarters. In urban Ontario the bookmobile provided an extension service and they proved to be successful in cities such as Ottawa, Hamilton, and London. Expanding suburban municipal library boards, such as East York and North York, purchased bookmobiles to reach people directly at

designated stops. Through the 1960s and 1970s bookmobiles continued to be popular, although improved branch library services across the province in cities and counties lessened their need to reach people. After 2000, bookmobile service again picked up and today (2025) there are about fifteen bookmobiles in operation across Ontario because it is reasonably economical and reaches many people who find it more convenient to use.

Jean Eckmier and her husband, Glen, remained with the Huron system until their retirement in 1961.

View the 35 minute film *The Books Drive On* on YouTube at this link.

My blog on the *Library on Wheels*, the 1945 Fraser Valley bookmobile film, is at this link.

My blog on two later Canadian bookmobile films is at this link.

Friday, April 25, 2025

Canadian School Libraries and Books for Youth Forum at Winnipeg, 1949

School Library Development in Postwar Canada, 1945–50

Attention to school library work and better cooperation between public libraries and schools increased after the Second World War. While many libraries in secondary schools were satisfactory and there were a few outstanding ones, small classroom collections prevailed in elementary schools. For example, at a rural school in Brechin just outside Nanaimo, British Columbia, each classroom featured a small library with books supplied by the Vancouver Island Union Library. Teachers frequently were in charge of these collections, although a few trained teacher-librarians supervised activities in some places.

Larger public libraries, such as Toronto and Vancouver, led the way in providing collections for schools to use and promoted their services in children's libraries or special rooms for teenagers. In the case of Vancouver, elementary schools could borrow recreational books to augment their own collections from a central collection in the public library's school department. Schools provided library rooms and teacher-librarians, while the public library, under the direction of Isabel McTavish, acquired, catalogued, and distributed the books.

Although the war years had stalled school library development, after the formation of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) in 1946, services for children received more consideration. The Canadian Association of Children's Librarians (established in 1939) became a constituent section of CLA with the ambitious goal of promoting reading on a national scale. The group established a Book of the Year Award in 1947 to highlight worthy Canadian authors or books published in Canada. Two years later, CLA launched Young Canada's Book Week in November 1949 to encourage reading for young Canadians. In 1950, a CLA Youth Interest Group to address teenage readers became an official section of CLA

Children reading in a classroom library,
Brechin, British Columbia, c.1944

Because it was commonplace for public libraries to supply schools with reading materials after the war, the idea of 'children' or 'youth' was broadly construed. Elementary school children and younger teenagers were often considered collectively following the example of the American Library Association Division of Libraries for Children and Young People established in 1941 for schools, children, and public librarians. By 1940, the Ontario Library Association had already formed two separate official sections: a 'children's librarians' group and a 'school and intermediate libraries' group for teachers and librarians engaged in high school work. These sections sometimes worked collaboratively and their members often attended sessions together at the OLA annual conference. Consequently, many school librarians readily adapted the public library concept of promoting 'good reading' as the alternative to series books, comics, or poor quality writers.

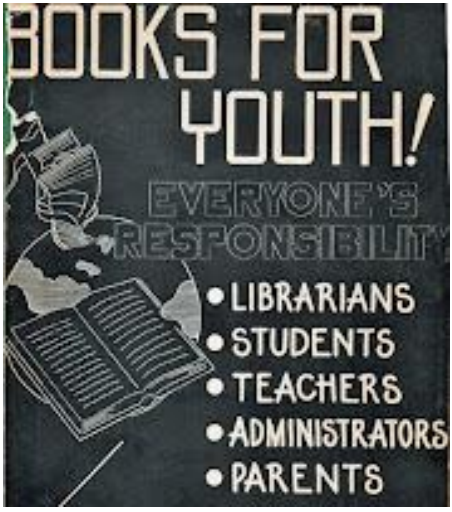
After the war, the CLA took the lead on the national stage. Most school libraries were often simply collections of books where keener students might find reading materials. Now, school libraries were assuming a workshop or service point role where students and classes could gather to discover resources to enrich their experiences. The new library approach attempted to further research, curriculum enrichment, independent study, and recreational reading. Many librarians felt the best way to discover what young people were reading was to make friends with them and listen carefully. Then, they could find out what they were thinking about, what they were reading, and discuss books more satisfactorily. As part of the CLA 1949 annual meeting in Manitoba, a subsequent two-day forum of ideas was planned to discuss youth services in more detail. The focus was on current practices in school librarianship, not collections or facilities.

The Institute on School Library Work was held on June 24–25 at the Manitoba Legislature under the direction of Amelia Munson, New York Public Library. She was quite experienced in working with youth and an entertaining speaker. She taught at Columbia University on the reading interests of adolescents for almost two decades and inspired a generation of students, such as Louise Riley, who earned her MA in LS at Columbia in 1942 and made children's work in the Calgary Public Library a model for other libraries in Alberta. Although Munson was nearing the end of her career, she became widely known for her handbook on young adult services, ***An Ample Field: Books and Young People***, published in 1950 by the American Library Association.

The Institute on School Library Work, Winnipeg, June 1949

The proceedings and discussions held in four sessions at the Manitoba Legislature were published as ***Books for Youth: Everyone's Responsibility; School Library Institute Proceedings, June 24-25, 1949, Winnipeg, Manitoba*** by the CLA in 1949. Amelia Munson addressed her audience on the subject of the pleasures of reading and the responsibilities of librarians three times:

- "Growth through Reading"
- "What Books? For Whom?"
- "Who, Me?"



The first general address at the beginning of the meeting revealed Munson's extensive literary background with English and American authors from Shakespeare to Robert Frost. She felt that if a person actively read compelling, cultivated literature that spanned many issues and many periods of time, then the possibility of personal growth surely existed.

If without reservation, with all that is in us, we can associate ourselves with such high matters, with such great comparisons, how can we fail to grow—in understanding, in compassion, in integrity? And it is such a simple matter, really. But we need occasionally to have our attention drawn to it. "Men need in general," says Dr. Johnson, "not so much to be informed as to be reminded." That is what I have been trying to do tonight.

Hélène Grenier, the head of the Teachers' Library for the Montreal Catholic School Commission, closed the opening session by reiterating the critical roles librarians and teachers played in the lives of youngsters. The Director's address at the second general session the next morning dealt with the demanding challenge of mastering a diverse range of reading interests and readers' abilities.

When I think of the voracious reading of adolescents, I do not have a picture of a mass of young people steadily and single-mindedly devouring a book, as an army of grasshoppers crunches its way through a wheat field. ... Not all of them are readers, of course, as we think of readers. Some are 'reluctant' and some are 'rebellious,' but I hesitate to call any of them non-readers. I should prefer to say they are all potential non-readers, unless we do something about it.

Personal and professional responsibility was her focus: "I believe one's first duty is to be a real person—then, perhaps, a professional one." She insisted that librarians were important intermediaries between the world of books and reading with students and young persons.

It is for us to see to it that the vital line of communication between the great spirits of the past and the eager, questing spirits of today remains unbroken, it is our function to brush aside the obstacles that confront contemporary readers and give them direct access to the mind and heart of the writer; and it is our obligation, an obligation that rests heavily upon us for we deal with materials "too dear for our possessing," and yet an obligation that it is a delight to fulfil, to find some way of sharing that richness.

Small discussion groups were formed during this session. Then reports were made when the groups returned to a general assembly. One concern that merited special consideration was the 'retarded' reader, today an outdated term which would be replaced in subsequent decades by youngsters experiencing 'reading disorders' or 'reading difficulty.' Each individual required careful consideration, and by using attractive books or story-telling techniques, and by exploring personal interests, the child might begin to like reading. Discovering the interests of 'rebellious' readers was another challenge requiring individual attention. Finally, 'resourceful' readers who read widely and were capable of finding information on their own, could be guided to resources beyond the school library and encouraged to expand their reading interest. Finding a young person's interests and building upon them was the key to a successful relationship with students.

Lyle Evans, the supervisor of school libraries for the Saskatchewan Department of Education, led the third session. She called upon all participants to outline how they organized their collections and how students could be helped to achieve better reading levels and enjoy reading. Teachers and librarians presented a variety of current methods: Story Telling — Book Talks — Student

Helpers — Library Clubs — Work with Individuals — Classroom Libraries — Audio-Visual Aids — Radio Broadcasts in Schools — Picture Collections — Exhibits. In the subsequent discussion, films, plays, puppet shows, and collaboration with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation also came under consideration.

The final evening session featured presentations on responsibility in a school setting. Again, Amelia Munson offered inspiration about the merits of reading for young people:

For though changes—revolutionary changes—occur in thinking and in conduct, in science and philosophy, even in human nature, the needs and the satisfaction of the human spirit remains constant. ... There must always be heights for the aspiring spirit; whether they be in Nature, in Art, in Philosophy, in Religion is not of much concern.

Four speakers described their work at this session. Lyle Evans talked about the role of the teacher-librarian in the educational program in relation to the resources of libraries or classroom collections in schools. They might work as instructors but were managers with the difficult goal of developing a love of reading regardless of resource limitations. The role of school principals was also important as well for they chose the school library leaders, designated space(s) for collections, and provided funding within their budgets. District superintendents, such as Herbert McIntosh in Winnipeg, oversaw developments on a broader scale and liaised with educational officials across an entire province. He said schools were tax-supported institutions and the public "should know why a school needs a library and what it does with it." In conclusion, the role of elected school board trustees was briefly touched on, and questions were raised about library plans for development in the Winnipeg school system.

In the closing appreciation, all members were urged to participate in the forthcoming Young Canada's Book Week/Semaine du livre pour la jeunesse canadienne, which would be held for the first time. Among the 106 registrants, there were influential leaders in children's and school library work nationwide. Almost half the participants were from Manitoba, led by Eleanor Boyce, Manitoba Inspector of Schools, and Myrtle Lewis, Manitoba Department of Education Library. A few other prominent names in school library work included Alvine Bélisle (École Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Montreal), Louise Riley (Calgary Public Library), Margaret Fraser (Galt Collegiate Institute), Kathleen Dolan (Sir Adam Beck Collegiate in London), Isabel McTavish (Vancouver Public Library), and Elizabeth Mott (Baron Byng High School in Montreal).

At mid-century, school library work was taking place in ten separate provincial education systems summarized by a 1951 Canadian Education Association report: "The increasing attention which departments of education are giving to

school libraries, in the provision of expert advice and recommendations, books, and funds, and the instruction in the use of the library which is being introduced into schools are indications of the recognition of the importance of the library to the school program." Like their counterparts in public libraries, school libraries sought to impart an appreciation of literature with the added responsibility to instruct students in library methods. It was an optimistic outlook, but at the start of the 1950s and for many years ahead, school librarianship and teacher-librarians continued to be a minority voice in public library-oriented associations and departments of education across the country.

The 1949 workshop marked a step forward in thinking about school librarianship. During the subsequent decade, library groupings devoted to youth services, children's work, and school libraries divided librarians' attention while educational officials, principals, and teachers struggled to cope with increasing enrollments due to the baby boom after 1945. It would be ten years before CLA organized another successful two-day national conference on school librarianship held in Edmonton in 1959.

The Library Service in the Schools Workshop held in Edmonton in 1959 is the subject of my previous blog.

Canadian school library development at mid-century is subject of a previous post.

Two talks by Marshall McLuhan to Ontario librarians in the 1950s is a post at this link.

Sunday, April 06, 2025

From Library Work to Library Science: Canadian Librarianship, 1920–1960

Canadian librarianship was formed incrementally and was loosely structured in the first half of the twentieth century when it emerged as a modern professional career. Librarianship coalesced around the broader field of an emerging academic discipline, library science, an expanding range of professional specialties (e.g., children's librarianship or special library work), increasingly technical aspects related to acquiring and organizing different types of resources and offering readers and other clients assistance and information. For the most part, librarians in various settings sought to develop an intermediary role between their clientele and the world of print. They did so when library science evolved as a university-based discipline grounded in the knowledge and techniques of collecting, organizing, and managing records for public use. In 2019, I examined three significant issues on this topic in an article From Library Work to Library Science in *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 14 (1), 1–41. It is freely available and provides a more detailed discussion of the issues summarized in this blog: the primacy of a service ethic, the question of acceptable library education and training, and issues surrounding the profession's female intensity during first-wave feminism before 1960.

After 1920, Canadian librarians benefited from adopting a service philosophy, the evolution of higher educational qualifications, improved workplace methods, and the formation of associations which offered self-improvement and advancement of libraries. The aims of improved service for an expanded reading public, development of bibliographic methods, and connecting people with books were constant goals in the small, female-intensive Canadian library community. Librarians began to position themselves as educated, reliable, and unselfish professionals who fulfilled their users' information needs. Even though they were employed in various institutional roles with a diverse clientele and administrative structures that made overarching consensus difficult, librarians believed they were achieving standing as a 'professional librarian' and reserving for themselves the idea of self-managed careers that suited a variety of employment settings.

Over four decades, Canadian librarianship evolved progressively from elementary library training after WWI to the career-oriented, service-minded librarian underpinned by the academic subject of library science in the early 1960s. The service orientation was tailored to suit the needs of users and communities. Accordingly, librarianship could claim a general societal role of connecting people with resources and information using trusted professional expertise. Canada's foremost spokesperson for librarians in the first part of the

20th century, George Locke, was confident on this score. In speaking to University of Toronto students in 1932 he declared, “So long as we are a democracy we need intelligence; so long as we need intelligence in the community we need librarians; so we shall need librarians to the end of Time.”

A service profession

A service philosophy was already ingrained in library work by 1920, so its adoption by a growing number of librarians presented no difficulty. In 1919, Mary J.L. Black, chief librarian at Fort William Public Library (now Thunder Bay), prioritized her thoughts about successful contemporary librarianship: (1) the spirit of service, (2) a knowledge of people, (3) a knowledge of books, (4) an acquaintance with library technique and business training. In the same year, Mabel Dunham, chief librarian at Kitchener Public Library, encouraged young female university graduates to display “the splendid spirit of unselfish service for others” in their daily library work. In 1926, Edgar Robinson, Vancouver’s chief librarian, declared, “For freedom of activity and opportunity for expression of individuality through service, library work has no equal.” Three decades later, when the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) considered the state of local Canadian libraries, it recognized that “librarians must know their books and how to care for them; they must also know their community and how to serve it.” Public service became a keynote of librarianship as it emerged slowly as a self-directed profession in Canada before the dramatic social, educational, and cultural changes of the 1960s.

Library Science and professional training

Education and training were crucial ingredients in the development of Canadian librarianship. McGill University and the University of Toronto established graduate library degree programs in the 1920s and benefited from improved accreditation programs instituted by the American Library Association in the 1930s. By the 1960s, the Canadian Library Association (CLA) confirmed that a graduate with a two-term bachelor’s degree in library science (the BLS) was the standard requirement to gain entry into the profession. At its November meeting in 1959, the CLA Council adopted the following statement concerning a “fully qualified professional librarian:” (1) the equivalent of the BA degree as granted in Canada and (2) proof of library training equivalent to that required for the BLS in Canada or master’s (MLS) in the United States, (3) persons with less training employed in Canada may be limited in professional advancement. Of course, some ambitious students pursued library degrees in prestigious American schools, such as Columbia, which held more extensive collections. After the Carnegie Corporation of New York began funding fellowship grants for library work in 1929, 19 librarians working in Canada received $32,100 between 1931–42 to further their studies outside of Canada. When American library schools

began replacing the BLS after 1948 with a one-year master's degree as the first entry into librarianship, Toronto (1951) and McGill (1956) followed suit, although they required students to first possess a BLS. Throughout this period, library education blended a humanistic public-spirited service and print-oriented stewardship to librarianship centred around a popular slogan: "If you like people, you like books."

McGill University Summer Library School Students, Banff, Alberta, 1941

The discipline of library science provided librarians with a core expertise combined with techniques to manage libraries and assist users that was mostly aligned with humanistic values. Librarians were inclined to interpret 'scientific' in the sense of employing orderly practices and managing efficiency in the cause of public service. A nebulous 'philosophy of librarianship' often sufficed in place of principled statements on issues such censorship, which was a typically muted subject. Librarianship exhibited a combination of cultural stewardship of printed resources and social service allied with managerial efficiency to serve a variety of clientele. As such, it emerged slowly as a self-directed profession in Canada before the dramatic social, educational, and cultural changes of the 1960s.

A Woman's Profession

A hallmark of librarianship is its female-intensity. A British woman working at Toronto Public Library in the late 1920s noted the unmistakable gendered landscape of Canadian libraries: 2 men managed a staff of 150 women, although nearly every small town was run by a woman. Gendered perceptions obscured the steady progress libraries and librarians were making during first-wave feminism. Although men were usually chief librarians in major cities, such as Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, Calgary, and Montreal, almost all public libraries

in small cities were headed by women. Two cities, Windsor and Hamilton, were led by women who became presidents of the CLA. The war years helped fortify the idea that women could perform equally as well as men. Accounts of library work by Elizabeth Loosley in 1945 depicting challenges at an air force station, and by Monica Hodges in 1946 describing difficulties in naval libraries, disproved the notion that women could not cope with demanding situations. After the war, women in all sectors of librarianship proved their worth as managers, belying the convention that the highest appointments should be reserved for men. In the 1950s, CLA promoted librarianship as a career for intelligent, active professionals of advanced university standing. Because societal stereotypes shaped librarianship, Roma Harris in ***Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession*** *(*1992) argued that the intermediary role centering on the client's need rather than the expertise of the librarian was not fully appreciated due to female intensity. As well, a case can be made that the small number of librarians hampered efforts to achieve enhanced status as a profession: graduate numbers were perennially low between 1931–65. The 1931 Canadian census reported 1,009 librarians as a separate professional category subdivided into 6 groupings. The 1961 census reported a tripling to 3,460 librarians subdivided by 12 subcategories. Obviously, librarianship was a small field at the outset of the 1960s. Gendered problems, especially the 'pay gap' and the 'glass ceiling,' remained low-key issues until second-wave feminism surfaced in earnest after the federal government's Royal Commission on the Status of Women issued its report in December 1970 and societal norms began to change.

Collective Action

Before 1920, there were only two provincial library associations: Ontario (1900) and British Columbia (1911). Before the end of WW II, Québec (1932), the Maritimes (1935), Manitoba (1936), Saskatchewan (1942), and Alberta (1944) formed associations. Smaller groups were also established. Special librarians formed two chapters, one in Montreal (1932) and one in Toronto (1940). Children's librarians launched their own national association in 1939 and l'Association canadienne des bibliothèques catholiques formed in 1943 (changed to Association canadienne des bibliothécaires de langue française in 1948). These provided the basis for collective action and personal growth. Canada was known to be a country of regional diversity and it was not until the postwar era that a national voice, the CLA, emerged. This association allowed libraries and librarians to clarify and advocate for particular issues, improve individual expertise, form groups to engage in specialist development, recognize commonalities of purpose beyond local and provincial scales, and support the public interest. CLA was a decisive force in creating a National Library in 1953 and promoting librarianship on a national scale. As librarianship became more specialized, CLA created specific sections in the 1950s. Shortly after 1960, two major divisions formed: the Canadian School Library Association (1961) and the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries (1963). The Canadian

Association of Law Libraries separated from its American counterpart in 1963. Thereafter, the tendency to create small, specialized or local library bodies accelerated, and national considerations lessened.

Beyond the 1960s

The achievement of status as a minor profession was gradual during the depression and war years, with an upturn in the postwar era. Canadian librarians chose to a pursue informal, flexible professionalization by assuming a service philosophy, elaborating educational standards, establishing standardized workplace methods, and developing collective action by in multiple associations. The postwar era featured economic growth, population increases, more intensive research, and educational and social conditions that warranted the need for libraries to supply published resources and new media. Yet, at the outset of the 1960s, the future, not the current foundation, engaged the attention of library educators, practitioners, and associations. A growing number of library science educators began introducing new subject matter into curricula related to research methods, abstracting, literature searching, and methods of information retrieval. In January 1958, the CLA organized a successful conference on documentation techniques at McGill University. In the following decade, it became evident that the emerging discipline of information science required librarians to consider more specialized ideas and training.

There was less reliance on library tradition, especially relationships with print resources. The characteristics of new media that impacted society, famously condensed to "the medium is the message" by Marshall McLuhan in the mid-1960s, presented challenges to the book-centred knowledge espoused by librarians. Second-wave feminism opposed gender inequality and negative stereotypes, but significant progress in libraries would have to await a sharper focus on disparities by the 'four-fifths minority' in the 1970s. As before, the evolution of Canadian librarianship continued professionally with the value of service at the forefront together with newer ideas, such as intellectual freedom, and areas of concern, such as literacy. Issues would become broader, less concerned with the printed formats and their organization and more focused on computer technology. The beginning of the merger of librarianship and the information professional was underway. After 1960, as the core knowledge of librarians began to transition to library and information science, they would adopt new professional values and confront social issues in a more forthright way as the computer era and more assertive feminism began to take hold.

Mabel Dunham and librarianship as a profession for women is the subject of my previous blog.

My blog post on an early 1936 Canadian library textbook on library science is at this link.

The development of a library profession in Ontario is the subject of my previous blog.

The development of post-secondary libraries and librarianship after WW II is the subject of my previous blog.

The Carnegie program to finance Canadian college collections in the 1930s is the subject of my previous blog.

Two theses on Canadian academic librarianship in the 1940s are the subject of my previous blog.

Tuesday, April 01, 2025

Professionalization and Librarianship in Ontario, 1920–1975

There is general agreement that librarianship is a profession (or semi-profession), distinct from an occupation. Over time, it has constructed its diverse character in Britain, the United States, and Canada. For five decades until 1975, librarians in the province of Ontario sought to emulate the popular 'trait model' of professionalism to institutionalize legal recognition and to secure advanced social status. I believe these attempts to achieve a distinctive status may be characterized as a 'professional project,' the process whereby an occupation seeks to institutionalize legal recognition and improve its social standing.

The Trait Theory and Professionalism

The trait theory comprises common characteristics that Ontario librarians felt were useful in the identification of a profession in the early part of the 20th century, attributes such as:

- A formal education process for entry into a profession;
- A base of specialized knowledge, skills, and training used in work;
- Ethical principles and standards guiding practitioners;
- A service commitment in the performance of duties;
- Self-regulation by a recognized professional organization.

Ultimately, efforts by Ontario librarians were unsuccessful and they had turned away from the trait features by the mid-1970s. They were able to realize some characteristics, such as advanced educational standing and a service orientation; however, the small total number of librarians, their fluctuating leadership goals for self-regulation, and the provincial government's preference to rein in the authority of professions became decisive barriers to achieving formal professional status. I wrote at length on this period of history in a paper published in *Library and Information History* more than a dozen years ago, in 2012. Complete details are available as a PDF at this link: Professionalization and Librarianship in Ontario, 1920–75. A summary review of the pursuit of the trait theory after 1920 illustrates there were difficulties in establishing unity due to conflicting goals, gender issues, a relatively small cohort of participants, and institutional constraints of a 'managed profession' among the four groupings (schools, special and public libraries, as well as college and universities). These issues were major constraints in securing the collective goal of a self-regulating body of professional librarians sanctioned by provincial legislation.

There was significant progress in identity formation, to be sure, during 1920–75. In the immediate decade following the First World War, librarians loosely structured the idea of a profession. Ontario was a small library stage offering few roles outside Toronto. The most notable feature of librarianship after 1920 was the predominance of young, university-trained females, a feature Mabel Dunham addressed in her Ontario Library Association (OLA) 1921 presidential address that was the subject of my earlier blog post in 2022. After the establishment in 1928 of a one-year academic program at the University of Toronto, women were drawn in growing numbers to library positions created in Ontario, thus forming the argument that librarianship was a 'woman's profession' beset by low pay and inferior prestige. Still, library science remained a comparatively small field of study compared to other disciplines. An undergraduate bachelor's degree (BLS) and eventually by 1970 a master's degree (MLS) became established standards for entry into the profession. After the Second World War, the Ontario Department of Education linked provincial grants to public libraries with certification of librarians to recognize higher educational standards. Certification was regarded by public librarians as a step forward in seeking professional status; however, it ceased in 1972 after the viewpoint that professional standards were maintained by the entrance requirements of graduate library schools and by accreditation reviews by Canadian and American library associations prevailed.

As the number of university-trained graduates increased, an OLA Professional Committee was formed in 1955. This group provided the opportunity to advance the cause of professionalism. By 1960, the Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario had incorporated as a separate entity (IPLO), attracting librarians working in all types of libraries. Its stated aims were: (1) to promote library service and increase public interest in its professional aspects; (2) to raise the standard of library services by defining and upholding standards of professional qualifications; (3) to promote the prestige, welfare, and interests of librarians; and (4) to cooperate with other organizations with similar objectives. IPLO reserved membership for qualified librarians according to its constitution. Its attempt to form a professional body with potential licensing and self-monitoring for librarians occurred when there was tremendous expansion in Ontario's schools, universities, and colleges. On the other hand, many new library associations began to represent the interests of librarians, thus diminishing IPLO's membership drives on a province-wide footing. The Institute never registered more than 500 members. As interest dwindled, it eventually disbanded in 1976. Reliance on the trait theory of professionalism had run its course. Greg Linnell

BILL Pr40

An Act respecting the
Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario

Mr. Lawrence

TORONTO

gives a complete account of IPLO's history in a 2008 article at this link: IPLO.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of major societal and economic change. For librarians, who now embraced the term 'professional librarian,' perhaps the most important issues were the adoption of intellectual freedom principles, gender considerations, collective bargaining, and the proliferation of library associations. As well, there was more clarity about the roles of professionals and non-professionals in libraries. Library technician graduates from new community college programs assumed many tasks formerly undertaken by librarians. The challenge of automation and information technology would result in the formation of 'systems' departments and employment of IT experts within libraries. These trends absorbed the attention of librarians resulting in a declining concern about professional status.

Traditionally, librarians were conservative voices in censorship debates because they were salaried employees and decisions usually were beyond their control. They seldom spoke out in opposition to controversies related to book selection. 'The right book for the right reader' served as a watchword for decades. Substituting a good book for a bad book was a common rationale when controversies arose. Too often, however, the stance of neutrality shielded the common practice of using restricted shelves for objectionable (but legally published) books. These attitudes began to change after the OLA adopted a statement on intellectual freedom in 1963. By doing so, the association was confirming a new role for librarians that would eventually lead to annual campaigns promoting Freedom to Read.

When second-generation feminism began to take hold after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada published its report in 1970, female librarians began reconsidering their place in the profession. Often, women were being passed over for major positions and the phrase the 'four-fifths majority' gained adherents who demanded merited promotions, improved salaries equal to male counterparts, and benefits such as maternity leave. These were issues that would continue to be wrestled with for some time. The gender underpinning of librarianship has been regarded as a significant factor contributing to the lack of recognition of librarianship as a profession in many studies. Still, its effect in transforming policies and improving working conditions in libraries after 1975 is undoubtedly more important. Librarians jettisoned suspicion of unions and began to embrace public sector collective bargaining in public libraries, the post-secondary sector, and schools.

A New Search for Professionalism after 1975

The 'type-of-library' organizational preference developed in the 1960s became entrenched in the 1970s as OLA and CLA restructured to better serve members' interests. New associations were professionally tailored towards careers in

colleges and universities, public libraries, special libraries, and schools. Librarians' interests began to centre on personal professional development in local settings instead of a more collective profession on a provincial scale that IPLO had exemplified. Librarians began to pursue individual, discretionary claims to professional status by utilizing concepts associated with other information-management professionals and integrating these ideas within librarianship. A new model with identifiable characteristics and advantages would need to be created for professionalization to prevail. Collectively, from 1920 to 1975, some achievements, such as consensus about formal educational qualifications or intellectual freedom, had laid the foundation for better educational qualifications and principles that continue to resonate in librarianship.

From the 1970s to today it is possible to discern a new 'discretionary' or 'alternative' model of professionalism and collective identity that is adaptable to individual preferences and different types of organizations where librarians are employed. The features of this type of professionalism include:

- the evolution of an educational framework from library science to library and information science;
- acceptance by librarians of their inherent diversity shaped by 'type of library' activities and variety of clientele;
- the retention of collective bargaining that took hold in the 1970s;
- the acknowledgement of the integration of organizational work in libraries with other professionals possessing different credentials;
- a commitment to the principle of intellectual freedom;
- informal, discretionary recognition of common aspirations identified by library associations;
- a personal autonomy built upon knowledge, skills, and common bonds of the profession.

There has been an increasing tendency for all professionals to work in integrated, bureaucratic organizations in the public and private sectors in the late 20th century—hospitals, government, corporations, schools, libraries—instead of remaining independent. In *The System of Professions* in 1988, the sociologist Andrew Abbott placed librarianship within a grouping of information professions. Librarians work in conjunction with other professionals who perform different types of work within organizations that recognize multiple credentials. This flexible conceptualization turns its back on formally adopting characteristics associated with the trait theory of professions by proposing a 'federated' framework. Certainly, librarians share some common goals with information scientists, archivists, and records managers. It seems one constant is that librarians will continue to adjust their vision of professionalism to the expectations between an individual's perspective in an informal community devoted to librarianship and their identification within an organization.

My blog on the development of librarianship in Canada from 1920 to 1960 is at this link.

Mabel Dunham and her concept of librarianship as a profession for women in 1921 is at this link.

Friday, March 21, 2025

Special Libraries Organize in Montreal and Toronto, 1930–1945

Special Libraries in Canada

The special library was amongst the first libraries to appear in 18th century Canada with the creation of a small book collection in the l'Hôpital général de Québec in 1726. In the early 19th century, important collections were established in Montreal, such as the Advocates' Library (1828) and libraries for the McGill College Medical Library (founded 1829) and the Natural History Society (founded 1825). Other libraries were developed for prominent legal, literary and scientific organizations in the following decades: the Quebec Literary and Historical Society (founded 1824) in Quebec City, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Royal Canadian Institute established by mid-century in Toronto. In the first decades of the 20th century, growth continued to serve more formal organizations such as the Academy of Medicine (1907) in Toronto, which came under the direction of Margaret Ridley Charlton, and the Royal Bank of Canada (1913) in Montreal. Throughout this lengthy period, of course, government libraries built significant collections in provincial legislatures and in Ottawa.

The concept of a special library—collections and staff to serve governments, businesses, professional groups, public institutions such as hospitals, and a wide variety of organizations—coalesced in the early decades of the 20th century, especially after the formation of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in 1909 in the United States and the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux (1924) in Britain. The primary aims of the special library 'movement' in these countries generally focused on services to collect and evaluate current publications and research; to organize relevant written, unpublished or peripheral information; and to assemble and disseminate publications, information, and data (often in abstract or memorandum form) to advance individual or group work within organizations. In an era when most American and British librarians were concerned with public library progress, special librarians focused on the information process within their organization. They paid particular attention to the needs of their users, often employing non-traditional methods not taught in library schools.

Special librarians shared some ideas in common with an early 20th century European field of study, 'Documentation.' Documentalists were concerned with any type of record and or evolving technology with the potential for providing pertinent information to further the aims of an organization or researchers. They were especially interested in building scientific indexes, the organization of subject literature, and the techniques of improving information retrieval. But, for the most part, special librarians remained oriented to providing typical library reference service through their usual resources. Indeed, this trend is evident from the activity in Canadian special libraries and publications of leading figures before the end of the Second World War.

Bank of Canada Library, Research Dept., Ottawa, c.1944

In Canada, special library work was in a nascent stage. When American special librarians came to meet in Toronto with the American Library Association convention at Toronto in June 1927, William O. Carson, the Ontario Inspector of Public Libraries, wrote in the summer issue of ***Special Libraries***, "If there is any definition of a special library which includes all that it is and excludes all that it is not, I have never heard it." He went on to elaborate saying, "Speaking frankly the special library ideal has not taken hold in this country in a large way; that is, we have not gone far in the establishment of highly specialized, representative collections of books and related material, organized and operated according to the niceties and exactitudes of modern library science." In the same June issue, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission in Toronto reported a typical library activity: keeping engineering staff posted on new developments, routing of government reports and technical publications to departments for circulation, and maintaining about 90 journals and the publications of 30 technical societies in a growing library that used the Dewey Decimal classification. Another contributor, an economist from the Royal Bank in Montreal, emphasized the importance of maintaining library data from current sources related to railroad earnings, freight

loadings, automobile production, newsprint, steel, flour, as well as employment and building statistics, in order to make accurate assessments for banking executives.

Special Library Growth in Montreal and Toronto

In the late 1920s, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto were emerging centres where special library work was becoming more important when businesses and government were expanding. There was a marked increase in libraries serving insurance, banking, and other commercial enterprises, along with the development of legislative and departmental libraries at the provincial and federal levels. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics ***Statistical Survey of Canadian Libraries*** in 1929–30 identified 59 government and 59 special libraries each as separate categories. Special libraries were "commercial and technical libraries, which include those of business corporations as well as those belonging to historical or scientific societies, law societies, literary and art organizations or those of a similar nature," and reported holdings of 464,885 items. The three largest special libraries reporting more than 25,000 items were the Royal Canadian Institute in Toronto, the New Brunswick Provincial Museum in St. John, and the Royal Society of Canada in Ottawa. In its next survey, 1930–31, the federal department combined the two groups and reported there were 132 government, technical society, and business libraries with 2,292,899 volumes, which combined represented 31 percent more books than public libraries. The vast majority of these books, of course, were held by governments, with the Library of Parliament alone holding 400,000 volumes.

Some notable librarians in the 1930–31 survey for Montreal would reappear over the next decades: Maréchal Nantel (Advocates' Library), Olive B. Le Boutillier (Art Association of Montreal, now the Montreal Museum of Fine Art), and Mary Jane Henderson (Sun Life Insurance). Nantel was a lawyer, writer, historian, librarian of the Bar of Montreal, and a prominent figure in the Société des Dix for many years. Olive Le Boutillier was active in Montreal art circles for many years. Mary Jane Henderson became a driving force in special library work in Montreal and a familiar face in the SLA. After earning a BA at Queen's University in 1925, she acquired a BLS from the Library School at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, in the following year. Then she gained experience as a cataloguer at Columbia University and joined SLA's New York Chapter before returning to Montreal in 1930 to organize Sun Life's investment library. She was inducted into the SLA Hall of Fame in 1964 in recognition of her service to the profession.

In the decade of the 1930s, despite the setback of the Great Depression, Montreal was the business and financial metropolitan centre of Canada. At this time, cooperative efforts were greatly encouraged, and at the beginning of 1932, a small committee of special librarians meeting at McGill University decided to form a special libraries chapter of the SLA. Mary Jane Henderson, the librarian

of Sun Life Assurance Company, became their leader and was elected president of the Montreal chapter at its first meeting on May 9, 1932. There were 19 members at this time and the first project the chapter chose was to publish a ***Directory of Special Libraries in Montreal*** in 1933 that detailed hours of opening, personnel, volumes, periodicals, telephone, and other operational details. The chapter's quarterly *Bulletin* first appeared in January 1935 edited by Beatrice V. Simon, the McGill University medical librarian. As its membership grew, the chapter requested SLA hold its annual convention in Montreal. The 28th annual conference of the Special Libraries Association was held in Montreal at the Mount Royal Hotel in June 1936. Henderson was in charge of organizing local arrangements and organized a successful program under the theme, "Putting Knowledge to Work," for the 1936 conference, which was the subject of my earlier blog.

The Montreal chapter participated in the inter-provincial library conference in Ottawa in 1937. Members from the Ontario and Quebec library associations held a session on cooperation between public and special libraries. Beatrice Simon, McGill University Medical Library and Mildrid Turnbull, the Royal Bank of Canada librarian in Montreal, spoke about efforts to avoid duplication and to use interloan. T.V. Mounteer, from the Bell Telephone Co. in Montreal, reprised his address on cooperative opportunities between industrial libraries and educational resources of the public library, a speech later published earlier in Special Libraries.

Although it appeared that the outbreak of war in 1939 would halt the progress of library growth, in fact, in early 1940, three librarians formed a plan to establish an SLA Toronto Chapter. Pauline Mary Hutchison, librarian of Canada Life Assurance, Peter Morgan, librarian of the Confederation Life Association, and Allan McKenzie, librarian of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. They called for a meeting in May where ten people approved a decision to request chapter status, which the SLA approved that summer.

The first regular meeting of the chapter was held at the Staff House of the Toronto Public Library on September 17, 1940, with Pauline Hutchison as the chair. The organization soon attracted new members, among them George A. Johnson (Law Society of Upper Canada), Edna Poole (Academy of Medicine), Grace Pincoe (Art Gallery of Toronto, now Art Gallery of Ontario), and Allan McKenzie of the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

AIRWOMEN'S LIBRARY AIDED

The Toronto Special Libraries association is assisting the R.C.A.F. (W.D.) No. 2 composite depot on Jarvis St. in organizing its library and is collecting books and money to add to the library. The Special Libraries association is made up of libraries from business and profes-sional organizations, such as insur-

Toronto Daily Star April 15, 1943

The chapter's first bulletin was published in January 1941, and a wartime project, the Air Force

library, began in January 1943. Members, under the direction of Mary Silverthorn and her Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division Committee, sorted and arranged books in the division depot and collected, by purchase and donation, hundreds of other books and magazines, both technical and recreational that were sorted and catalogued at the Confederation Life Association and returned at the depot for distribution. The chapter's wartime meetings continued with some prominent speakers. Grace Pincoe spoke on the Art Gallery of Toronto collection and its activities and Margaret Avision, who later became a distinguished poet, spoke about "Everything about Something" and her work at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs Library in the later stages of the war before she accepted a position at the University of Toronto library. Marie Tremaine spoke on "Can you tell me? Please," a thoughtful piece on typical reference work with the public she experienced at the Toronto Public Library. She would become one of the founding members of the Bibliographical Society of Canada in 1946.

The Postwar Future and Special Libraries

By the war's end, the DBS ***Survey of Libraries*** for 1946–48 indicated the progress of all groupings of special libraries after 1930. There were now 173 in total: 83 federal and provincial, 36 business, 13 law, 22 technical and professional, and 19 'other' (e.g., libraries for the blind) with a reported 110 trained staff in library science. The initiative and enthusiasm of the two Canadian chapters and their members, active forces in Canadian and Special librarianship, could reasonably be credited for some of this growth. Some members, such as Janet Saunders, a graduate of Queen's University (BA 1918) who worked at the International Labour Office library in Montreal during the war, pursued successful library careers beyond Canada. The Montreal chapter president in 1942, Catherine Anne Pearce (BLS McGill 1936), earned her masters in library science at the University of Illinois in 1947 and began working for the Transportation Association of America in Chicago and later the Richfield Oil Co. in Los Angeles. The two chapters also attracted members in smaller Canadian cities and in western Canada from Winnipeg as far as Victoria and Trail, BC. In the postwar period, the chapters would participate in a series of joint regional conferences with their SLA American counterparts in the Western New York Chapter in 1947–49. Several years later, in 1953, the Toronto Chapter would host the SLA annual conference in Toronto.

My blog post on the 1936 Special Libraries conference at Montreal is available at this link.

In 2003, Margaret Ridley Charlton was designated as a person of national historic significance.

Some useful publications during this period include:

Marvin, Donald M. “Relationship of the Library and Research Departments to the Bank.” *Special Libraries* 18 (Sept. 1927): 215–219.
Nantel, Maréchal. “The Advocates’ Library and the Montreal Bar.” *Law Library Journal* 27 (July 1934): 75–97.
Mounteer, T.V. “The Special Library: Partner in Industrial Education.” *Special Libraries* 27 (Nov. 1936): 298–301.
Morgan, Peter. “On Becoming a Special Librarian.” *Special Libraries* 28 (March 1937): 87–90.
Le Boutillier, Olive B. “The Clipping File in an Art Library.” *Special Libraries* 31 (April 1940): 131–132.
Pincoe, Grace. “A Trip to Study Methods in American Art Museum Libraries.” *Bulletin of the Toronto Chapter, Special Libraries Association* 2 (May 1942): [3-4].
Saunders, Janet F. “Development of the International Labour Office Library.” *Special Libraries* 33 (Oct. 1942): 290–294.
“The Special Library in Canada.” *Wilson Library Bulletin* 19 (Nov. 1944): 195–197.
Saunders, Janet F. “S.L.A. International Relations.” *Special Libraries* 35 (Dec. 1944): 490–493.
McKenzie, Allan. “Should Fiction Be Encouraged in Special Libraries?” *Special Libraries* 36 (June 1945): 147–150.
Lewis, Grace S. “Library of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, Canada.” *Special Libraries* 36 (Oct. 1945): 358–360.
Pratt, Phebe G. “School of Social Work Library.” *Special Libraries* 37 (April 1946): 115–117.
Pearce, Catherine Anne. “The Development of Special Libraries in Montreal and Toronto.” MS in LS thesis, University of Illinois, 1947. She was president of the Montreal Chapter from 1941–43 and worked in the United States after the war.

Monday, March 03, 2025

Canadian Mid-century School Libraries and Modern Education, 1945–1950

School Libraries in Canada before 1945

Although Canadian school libraries exhibited signs of progress during the 1930s, this work came to a halt for the most part at the outset of the Second World War. In the thirties, while British Columbia and Ontario schools continued the tradition of small classroom collections, promotion of good recreational reading, and reliance to a great extent on public libraries for book stocks and branches in schools, there were indications of change. In Ontario, Margaret Fraser, an influential high school librarian at Galt (now Cambridge), outlined what she felt the mission of the school library should be in 1938: “The school library should be the centre of all school activities, working with the teachers and students of all grades and departments. Its work is varied and continuous, but the librarian has three main aims: (1) to encourage reading, (2) to assist the teacher, (3) to teach the student to help himself.” In British Columbia, a ***Manual for Small School Libraries*** was issued in 1940 that recommended the American Library Association standards of a trained school librarian and separate classroom for elementary schools with more than 100 pupils and a school librarian or full-time librarian for schools with more than 500 students. Later, in 1945, a new set of American standards, *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow*, called on school authorities to assume full responsibility for school libraries and differentiated the roles and duties of the school librarian and the public librarian. A trend toward the school library as a reading and an information center as well as a place for student guidance in its own right was taking hold. Instruction in library skills, classroom and curriculum support, and recreational reading highlighted the role of the library as an important service point in schools.

Interest in school libraries by two western librarians, Louise Riley and Jack Brown, did continue during the wartime years. Their theses were the subject of my earlier blog on at this link. They explored school-public library cooperation and the need for greater provincial support from departments of education. Riley’s thesis in particular was an important study of school services in larger cities with more than 10,000 population in several provinces. She reported the typical state of affairs: “In Canada, classroom collections are provided by the

public library or the school board or both to some elementary and junior high schools in thirty-one of the fifty cities included in this report." As for centralized libraries: "There are some centralized school libraries in elementary and junior high schools in fifteen public school and three separate school systems." She concluded, "The school library movement is in its infancy in Canada." There was encouraging research on school library development in conjunction with public libraries during the war by two western librarians, Louise Riley and Jack Brown. However, wartime was not an opportune time to implement changes.

Towards the end of WW II, the Canadian Library Council issued ***Canada Needs Libraries***; it included provincial statements on the needs for improved school services. Although the main focus was on public library development, school libraries, especially at the secondary level, received more attention in the Ontario and Saskatchewan briefs. With the formation of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) in 1946, a truly national voice came into being for library work with children, adolescents, and students. Within a year, a section of CLA was established that included librarians interested in work for children and youth. In November 1947, the Association's journal published several articles on school library work, with a leading article that pointed to new directions and a new philosophy of service related to educational trends in North America. The principal author was a former teacher, Lillian Lyle Evans (BA 1940, Saskatchewan, and BLS 1942, Toronto), newly appointed as supervisor of school libraries for Saskatchewan in 1946. After working briefly at Toronto Public Library in the Kipling Room, the section for adolescents, and a Florida school library during the war, she became a dynamic force in Canadian school librarianship and eventually Canadian School Libraries Association president in 1969 –70. She set forth a new compelling role for school libraries that was being cultivated in the United States in the CLA *Bulletin* published in November 1947.

To-day the school library is conceived as a functional unit of the school, that is as a workshop or laboratory where individuals and classes carry on desirable activities and have valuable experiences. The school library now makes possible investigation and research, curriculum enrichment, independent study and recreational reading. This new and broader concept is a direct outgrowth of recent social and educational changes.

Canadian School Library Progress after 1945

Lyle Evans was referring to the progressive child-centred concept of schooling championed by John Dewey which flourished from the 1920s to 1950s. The traditional, conservative approach in education for a long time was teacher-centred. There was an emphasis on oral instruction, reading and reciting facts from a few graded texts, taking notes, memorizing information by repetition, and studying individually or in classroom groups. Small book collections usually satisfied this concept. Progressivism meant fitting instruction to the different

needs of each pupil; it meant curriculum revision and the eclipse of rote textbook learning; it meant new teaching methods focusing on real-world situations for pupil and group activities; and it meant a new emphasis on understanding social and civil affairs. For school library collections it meant supplying demands for wide reading and provision of varied reference sources. For library staffing it meant training in teaching and librarianship in order to guide or instruct pupils in selecting appropriate material to read and helping students clarify their thinking and reaching valid conclusions. In Lyle Evans' estimation, "the school library is an integral part of the educative process, and its objectives are actually identical with those of any modern educational program." At mid-century, progressive education was considered to be 'modern' and infused ideas and methods in the United States and Canada despite critics who preferred standardized testing and high standards, such as Hilda Neatby, who published ***So Little for the Mind*** in 1953.

The November 1947 pages of the **CLA *Bulletin*** featured prominent contemporary figures in school librarianship. Margaret E. Reid, an Ontario College of Education and Queen's University graduate, wrote on student library usage in St. Catharines. She outlined the usual types of student use: classes with a period of library science (normally grades nine and ten), classes brought to the library by teachers, and individual pupils from all grades. She believed student use of libraries could lay the foundation for a varied adulthood. The chief librarian at Trois Rivières, Claire Godbout, described how the newly established public library provided a school service for young students at six school deposits tended to on a weekly basis by visiting staff. Joseph A. Brunet, the director of school libraries for the Montreal Commission of Catholic Schools, was optimistic about progress in Quebec, especially in Montreal where books were selected, classified, and cataloged at the head office by a professional staff. Rural schools in Quebec were supplied with grants and small deposits of books for classrooms. He believed the idea of the school library was taking shape and gaining ground each year. Mary Silverthorn, a University of Toronto Library School professor, provided an extensive list of book selection aids. She noted there was reliance on American sources and that "school library work in Canada is hampered by the lack of catalogues and book lists designed for Canadian use." Dorothy Cullen, the director of the Prince Edward Island Libraries regional system, reported on the various ways its branches and headquarters supplied library service to all the island schools with deposits and books-by-mail. There was also a collection of professional literature for teachers at the regional headquarters in Charlottetown.

Summaries of provincial school library developments were also provided. In British Columbia, the Department of Education offered library training in summer school courses for teachers. These teacher-librarians held library positions in graded elementary schools and some junior high schools; however, in high schools only teachers who were also fully qualified librarians were appointed to full-time library positions. The Manitoba Department of Education

administered book grants and selection guides: “For the year 1946 books were selected for 1,557 one-room schools and 103 two-room schools, and orders checked for 224 graded schools, thus providing libraries for 2,790 teachers. For these schools 3,798 magazine subscriptions were placed.” A professional library for Winnipeg teachers was located in the reading room of the departmental library, but it was noted that professional training had not kept pace with book distributions. Lyle Evans reviewed her new duties in Saskatchewan and pointed to the successful initiative in a Cupar school district northeast of Regina to establish a core collection of texts, supplementary texts, and reference books for each rural school. A central pooled collection was started in the school unit main office staffed by a teacher acting as teacher-librarian. She felt, “The experiment has been so successful and attracted so much interest that many other units and [school] superintendents have been asking for guidance in organizing school library services in their areas.” Her work justified her enthusiasm about modernization that

The school library, then, provides material to enrich the school curriculum, develops in pupils good attitudes and habits of study, and promotes a lifelong interest in reading for information, recreation and mental stimulation. That is, the school library is an integral part of the educative process, and its objectives are actually identical with those of any modern educational program.

Despite this inspirational rhetoric, school libraries faced a difficult task implementing better conditions. When the Canadian Education Association surveyed school libraries on a province-by-province basis in 1951, it remarked on the general under developed state of affairs:

It will be noted that proportionately few elementary schools have separate libraries; classroom collections for lending and reference are more common. Libraries are found somewhat more frequently in secondary schools, but there too the classroom collection persists. The library collection as a separate and well equipped unit administered by a qualified person as an essential school service, just as gymnasium or cafeteria, has not been developed on an all-inclusive scale.

Canadian school librarians were not early advocates in supporting progressive ‘modern’ education philosophy. But after 1945, the provision of resources for critical thinking, experimental learning, developing social skills and other worthy features of progressive education came to the fore. Mary Mustard, a prominent school librarian from Brantford, Ontario, declared that a main goal of school library service was “to develop character through desirable book habits” thereby escaping the dull textbook routines of the past. At the CLA School Library Institute held in Winnipeg in June 1949, participants were excited to hear Amelia Munson, an experienced American youth services exponent from New York Library, speak to the issue of ‘Growth Through Reading,’ which offered students

opportunities to experience develop personally through the medium of books. In the following year, 1950, a Young People's Section of CLA was formed, distinct from Children's Librarians. The new section included public and school library work for teens, and in August 1953 it organized a successful thematic session in Ottawa during CLA's annual meeting—'Effective School Library Service.' Participants learned the effectiveness of any school library was determined by four factors: library accommodation, an adequate collection, a trained librarian, and an appropriate program of activities. Subsequently, in June 1958, the section sponsored a Workshop on Education of School Librarians at Quebec City where Lyle Evans reported on the current state of affairs for teacher-librarian training: "Six provinces regularly offer courses, two offer courses occasionally, and two do not offer any courses." The workshop registrants concluded national standards were needed to improve training for school library staffing, a task that would take several more years to complete.

From the outset of the decade and throughout the 1950s, the varied administrative arrangements and finances for schools determined by Canadian departments of education and school boards absorbed the attention of librarians, teachers, and administrators. There were thousands of school boards across the country and the progressive nature of reforms varied a great deal. Traditional pedagogic methods and the 3 R's were still important. Library proponents were grappling with the organization, staffing, facilities, and collections of school libraries in large bureaucratic provincial structures that were steadily reducing the number of school districts. Although improvements in services would continue to be gradual during the postwar period, nonetheless, after 1950 a national consensus was developing to support better libraries in schools, for formal education programs, and services based on child-centred learning. Many of these issues would be the result in a successful two-day national conference on school librarianship held in Edmonton in 1959 discussed in my previous blog. After 1960, advances in school librarianship would accelerate even as the influence of progressive education itself would begin to face challenges from conservative educators, competing educational issues such as the whole language philosophy of reading, new media, and rapid technological change.

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My blog on the School Library Institute held in Winnipeg in June 1949 is at this link.

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Margaret Fraser, "High School Libraries in Ontario." *The School[Secondary Ed.]; A Magazine Devoted to Elementary and Secondary Education* 27 (Oct. 1938): 148–151.

My blog on *Canada Needs Libraries* is at this link.

Lyle Evans, “The School Library in Modern Education.” *Canadian Library Association Bulletin* 3 (Nov. 1947): 29–30.

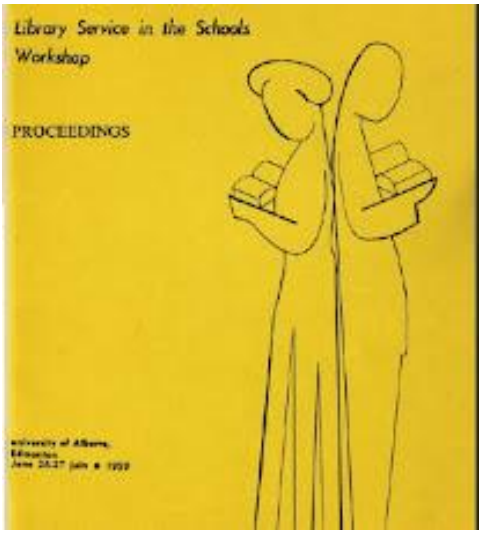
Mary Mustard, “Freedom from Textbooks.” *Canadian Library Association Bulletin* 6 (Sept. 1949): 35, 87.

Friday, February 14, 2025

Canadian School Libraries and Librarianship National Meeting in Edmonton, 1959

Proceedings of the Library Service in the Schools Workshop, University of Alberta, Edmonton, June 26–27, 1959. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association/Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques, September 1959. 59 p.

Canadian School Libraries before 1950



Although there were hundreds of Canadian school libraries by the mid-19th century, the vast majority were primarily small, informal classroom collections managed by busy one-room teachers in rural areas. As they developed in the first decades of the 20th century, larger elementary school libraries remained underfunded and continued to rely on access to small classroom collections. Students often used children's services supplied by public libraries (notably Toronto Public Library) or bookmobile services from regional or county libraries, a system patterned on British practice which offered the advantage of recreational reading. Separate centralized libraries in schools, distinct from public libraries, began to appear first in the secondary school sector, a model influenced by American experience that emphasized direct connections with school authorities and formal educational programs.

In the 1930s, the efforts of energetic librarians, such as Joseph A. Brunet, the director of school libraries for the Montreal Catholic School Commission, Arthur Slyfield (Oshawa), Margaret Fraser (Galt, now Cambridge), Mary Mustard (Brantford), and Isabel McTavish (Vancouver), began to spur development by advocating better facilities and collections, encouraging student use of libraries, initiating regional surveys, and publishing handbooks for students,

In the immediate postwar period following 1945, there was more government emphasis on improving services with the appointment of supervisors in departments of education: prominent librarians such as Lillian Evelyn (Lyle)

Evans in Saskatchewan in 1946 and Hélène Grenier in the Montreal Catholic School Commission in 1952. During this period, the Young People's Section of the Canadian Library Association (CLA) addressed many problems related to school libraries after its formation in 1950; nonetheless, progress seemed to unfold at a snail's pace. When the Canadian Education Association surveyed the nation's school libraries in 1951, it revealed their underdeveloped state; for example, in Nova Scotia, "most of the schools in the province have book collections, but more than half of the 554,187 volumes in individual schools are felt by the Department [of Education] to be of little value." Several years later, in 1958, when the Dominion Bureau of Statistics published a major survey of elementary and secondary schools in communities of 10,000 and over, it received responses from 200 school boards in 123 centres representing 2,951 schools. The survey revealed that only 1,058 schools (about a third), with a total pupil enrollment of 668,680, operated centralized libraries. Total stock amounted to 2,898,780 volumes or 4.5 volumes per pupil. Fully trained staff, with teacher training and library training to a degree level, was concentrated in intermediate or junior high schools and secondary schools, where 129 professionals supervised 270 libraries.

Canadian Library Association Meeting on School Libraries in 1959

To spur activity, CLA initiated action to plan a national workshop on schools to bring together leaders from seven national associations: the Canadian Association of School Inspectors & Superintendents, Canadian Book Publishers Association, Canadian Education Association, Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, Canadian School Trustees Association, and the Canadian Teachers Federation. CLA aimed to prompt discussion on problems of mutual interest and to allow participants to become acquainted personally. It was hoped that specific ideas arising from this first national workshop would encourage the sponsoring organizations to hold future sessions on specific subjects. The two-day workshop was held at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, in June 1959. The 195 registered delegates included school superintendents, principals, school board and public library board trustees, and public and school librarians. Formal presentations and separate discussion groups dealt with different topics. In general, the entire workshop was themed around providing resources, training librarians to provide services, and how services could best be organized.

Nancy Day, the Supervisor of Library Services in the South Carolina State Department of Education and former President of the American Association of School Libraries in 1954–55, addressed a general session on Friday morning with her topic, "The Place of School Library Service in Education." She emphasized the importance of recognizing the library as part of the curriculum where learning and learning skills occur. Librarians should select materials, provide reading guidance, and encourage the use of the collection. It is imperative to have

someone who knew the collection, the curriculum, and how to work with both children and teachers. Several freewheeling discussions on various issues took place in Friday afternoon breakout groups. There was a sharp division of opinion between school superintendents and librarians about how best to develop libraries initially. The former believed there was a more urgent need to get more books into the schools, their view being expressed as 'books before librarians.' The public library's role in providing student resources also came under scrutiny. Many delegates felt the responsibility for libraries in schools should come under a Department of Education. Public library activities should encourage school libraries but not directly provide the services, even though some school officials tended to expect such assistance.

There was a shift in thinking towards supporting the need for education officials to direct and fund libraries distinct from public libraries. Although cooperation was stressed, there was skepticism that public and school libraries could be combined successfully. There was general agreement that a certified teacher with some professional library training would be the ideal staff for a school library; but for larger schools, a professional librarian with a BEd could best work with teachers. Generally, delegates favoured the centralized library, a dedicated space available to all students which could also supply and refresh classroom collections and support provincial curricula.

On Saturday, Dr. Marion Jenkinson of the University of Alberta Faculty of Education gave an excellent summary of four topics that every group wrestled with. First, the approach librarians utilized to student reading was essential: the librarian viewed children individually, not as part of a classroom pattern. Second, improvements in teacher training were necessary. Thirdly, although there was an air of prestige bestowed on reading, often readers were derided as 'eggheads' or 'squares.' The Alberta professor declared, "We have to turn the TV image into the feeling that the reader is the 'best sort of guy to be.'" Fourth, the issue of teacher training was paramount:

Teacher training is not adequate. Elementary teachers frequently receive only seven months training. Here librarians can help in advising in the training. Librarianship is a graduate profession; in the elementary schools there is need for a graduate teaching profession. In a graduate programme for teachers, there should be courses in children's literature. (p. 51)

Dr. Jenkinson stated that teachers, interested groups, and parents should work cooperatively with librarians and education officials in their local communities. She concluded by stressing the need to clarify important issues. There should be more concise definitions about school library work: (1) identify the function of the teacher-librarian as opposed to the children's librarian; (2) clarify the purposes of different branches of library services; (3) articulate the basis for the selection of books; and (4) establish priorities in school library service. At the

end of the workshop, delegates adopted two resolutions: they requested the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS) to conduct a representative survey of libraries in publicly operated schools, and they asked for the Wilson *Education Index* to include the periodical, *The Reading Teache*r, in its indexing service.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the 1959 national workshop, but there is no doubt that the pace of school library progress quickened in the 1960s when provincial governments reduced the number of school districts and strengthened financial revenues. The DBS began surveying school libraries on an annual basis and by 1964 the Bureau reported that there were 2,595 centralized libraries staffed by 263 full-time professional school librarians. When Leonard Freiser was hired as chief librarian by the Toronto Board of Education in 1960, he began developing a centralized education center to provide resources for teachers and students in separate libraries in schools independent from Toronto Public Library. In Quebec, Alvine Bélisle became the provincial director of school libraries within the Department of Public Instruction in 1961.

During 1961 the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) was formed as a separate CLA division. The Association soon began publishing a lively quarterly newsletter, the *Moccasin Telegraph*. It also launched a national award in partnership with Encyclopaedia Britannica for elementary school libraries in 1967. School librarians also organized a Workshop on School Library Standards at the annual CLA conference held in Toronto in June 1965. Two years later, in 1967, *Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools* was published. After this time, the expansion of facilities, collections, and personnel laid the foundation for school library programs to the end of the century. However, success was not universal. By the early 1970s, it was evident that many school libraries were not able to meet the 1967 standards and that promotion of new guidelines would be necessary.

The meeting in Edmonton also allowed school librarians to network and develop professionally. Laurence Wiedrick, a teacher-librarian at Eastglen Composite High School in Edmonton, began teaching library studies at the University of Alberta in 1964. Another attendee, John Wright, librarian at the Aden Bowman Collegiate in Saskatoon, was appointed Supervisor of School Libraries for the Saskatchewan Department of Education in 1963 and later became president of CSLA in 1967. His colleague, Lyle Evans, followed him as CSLA president in 1969. Many other teachers, librarians, and administrators returned home to continue improving reading, teaching, and learning in elementary and secondary schools. A national consciousness and community of interest had been created on an inter-provincial scale. The delineation of fundamental issues was an essential ingredient in fostering progress in the subsequent decade. The recognition of the need for better-quality, modernized school libraries more closely linked to curriculum was an important (and lasting) outcome of the workshop.

My blog on school library development shortly after WW II is at this link.

My blog on the 1968 Jasper Park Workshop for school library education is at this link.

Friday, February 07, 2025

Edwin Williams and Robert Downs Report on Canadian Academic Libraries, 1962—1967

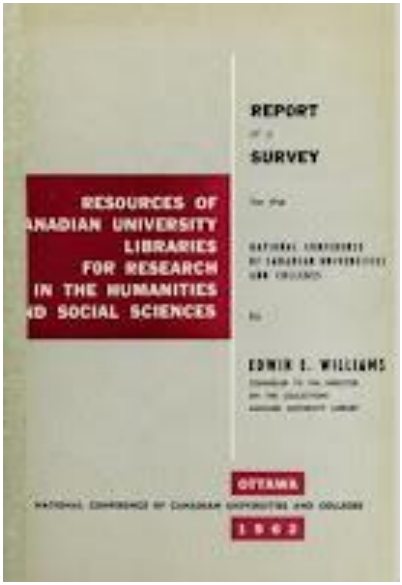
Resources of Canadian University Libraries for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences: Report of a Survey for the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, by Edwin E. Williams. Ottawa: National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, November 1962. 87 p.

Resources of Canadian Academic and Research Libraries/Ressources des Bibliothèques d'Université et de Recherche au Canada by Robert B. Downs. Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1967. 301 p.

By the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the number of full-time undergraduate and graduate university students across Canada was increasing dramatically, and provincial governments were granting new charters to several universities, such as Victoria, Calgary, Waterloo, York, Guelph, Brock, and Carleton. Additional funding for faculty, teaching staff, and buildings came from federal and provincial governments to accommodate this growth. Consequently, the expansion of libraries, especially collections, formed part of ambitious educational plans, a library phase which might appropriately be termed 'mid-century modernization.'

Edwin E. Williams Reports on Canadian Academic Libraries, 1962

During this period, library concerns were noted by the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges (NCCUC), which represented university presidents. The genesis of national planning for university libraries grew out of a recommendation by a library committee appointed by the NCCUC to survey academic libraries to evaluate their research capabilities, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Fourteen of Canada's largest academic libraries, which collectively held almost six million volumes, were selected for the survey. As with many Canadian studies, financing for the study came from the United States. Funds from the Council on Library Resources were secured, and Edwin E. Williams, the Counsellor to the Director of Collections of Harvard University Library, was chosen to conduct the survey.



Edwin Williams held many senior positions at the Harvard University library from 1940 until his retirement in 1980. More importantly, he was quite familiar with the Farmington Plan, a national project organized by American libraries to develop a cooperative acquisitions program for foreign materials. His study was conducted through conversations with 211 faculty members, the distribution of a questionnaire to professors on the strength of collections, the compilation of a checklist of 10 periodicals in each of 24 fields in the humanities and social sciences, and personal visits to each university. Williams published his findings late in 1962.

The findings of Williams' six-week survey were not surprising to informed observers.

Any recapitulation of strong points in Canadian research collections soon makes it evident that, except in Canadian subjects and in mediaeval studies, there are no collections in major fields that are outstanding as a whole — assuming that an outstanding collection is one strong enough to attract scholars from other countries. The collections that have reached this level are devoted to individuals or to comparatively narrow fields — Soviet church-state relations and D. H. Lawrence at Alberta; South China gazetteers and Robert Burns at British Columbia; Kipling at Dalhousie; the psychomechanics of language at Laval; Urdu, Thomas Browne, Noel Buxton, Viscount Hardinge, and Hume at McGill; Icelandic at Manitoba; Bonar Law at New Brunswick; and certain fields of Italian and Spanish drama, plus Coleridge, Dickens, Petronius, Tennyson, and Yeats at Toronto. (p 48)

Williams discovered universities were enthusiastic about the potential of inter-library loan even for undergraduates, a practice he cautioned against because it was not a substitute for strong campus collections. To further serious research, he recommended that the National Library's Union Catalogue project move ahead more rapidly along with the publication of a union list of serials in the humanities and social sciences. This latter task began in 1963 and was completed in 1968 with publication of *Periodicals in the Social Sciences and Humanities Currently Received by Canadian Libraries*. He discussed the advantages of strengthening research collections through an undertaking similar to the Farmington Plan, but felt libraries were not adequate to embark on this expenditure on their own. Instead, he suggested it would be more desirable to use "special funds" for specialization that could make inter-lending more effective for postgraduate programs. An extension of existing Canada Council grants would benefit the

entire country and allow universities to build their resources using local revenue. To spur cooperation in the development of research collections, the surveyor advised the creation of an Office of Canadian Library Resources in the National Library. The work of this office would allow universities to build substantial collections locally and ultimately serve national research activity. Another benefit would be the ability to compete more effectively in second-hand book markets for significant publications.

Williams declared that it would be expensive to strengthen university library collections, nevertheless, it was a necessary step to further national and regional educational goals. He concluded:

Yet, while foundations are being laid across the country, the National Library ought to move ahead rapidly, and the existing strong collections at Toronto and other Canadian universities should be improved; failure to develop the National Library and to make great collections out of good ones would demonstrate that Canada aspires to be no more than a dependency of other countries in graduate study and research in the humanities and social sciences. (p. 60)

Resources of Canadian University Libraries was enthusiastically received and served as a catalyst for transformative change. When the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries (CACUL) became a constituent part of the Canadian Library Association in June 1963, it assumed a leadership role in representing library concerns. CACUL immediately realized the importance of Williams' findings and began to liaise with the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges (NCCUC), representing university presidents dealing with the Williams' recommendations. The new library group advocated for the establishment of an Office of Library Resources, a proposal the NCCUC agreed to support later in the year. Eventually, in 1968, this office came into existence and became part of the collection development branch in the 1970s.

Later, in the fall 1963, when the NCCUC annual conference was held, CACUL successfully secured support for a more extensive national survey of academic libraries to expand and amplify the briefer work of Edwin Williams, which had been limited to library resources for graduate study in the humanities and social sciences. Subsequently, the NCCUC (reconstituted as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, AUCC) commissioned Professor Vincent Bladen to conduct a study of financing higher education in 1964 to which CACUL made a presentation on the need for greatly increased library funding, especially from the federal government. Also, the CACUL submission advised that 10% of a university operating budget be regarded as a minimum standard for collection purposes. The Bladen Commission adopted the federal proposal for funding in its final report, *Financing Higher Education in Canada*, in 1965. A year later, in 1966, the Canada Council announced annual funding for university

libraries for acquiring research collections which totalled more than $3,000,000 before it concluded in 1969.

Robert B. Downs Reports on Canadian Academic Libraries, 1967

The AUCC also agreed to launch a more extensive national survey with grants from the Canada Council and the Council on Library Resources in Washington, D.C. Robert B. Downs, the Dean of Library Administration at the University of Illinois, was invited to lead a survey which included three Canadians. Downs had pursued an illustrious academic career and served as President of the American Library Association in 1953–53. His mandate was quite broad: he was charged with assessing library administrative and technical organization, staffing, buildings, collections, and financing to maintain expected growth in the following decade. The Downs report was published in 1967 entitled *Resources of Canadian Academic and Research Libraries*.

Robert Downs submitted his report with a wealth of information on the current conditions of university libraries. There were 35 tables of data on 43 institutions that revealed marked progress had been made just a few years after the Williams report had landed on many desks; for example, 17 libraries reported adding an annual average of more than 20,000 volumes between 1961–66, a noticeable improvement with immediate postwar conditions, 1945–60. Indeed, 1963–64 marked the first time university libraries collectively began to add more than a million volumes per year to their holdings. *Resources* studied eleven major areas including administration, technical services, buildings, reader services (reference, instruction, and circulation), mechanization and automation, finances to sustain growth, cooperative activities, collections, special research holdings, and faculty and student views of the library. Downs' investigation was accomplished by conducting interviews, questionnaires, checklists, and personal observation. Downs took a broad brush approach to the idea of resources in his survey: he included general and special collections, finances, technical services, librarians and staff, library facilities, programs related to instruction, and a number of other services. A total of 41 recommendations were made, many of which became standard guidelines for professional decision-making for a generation of administrators and librarians. The array of information Downs produced included input from faculty and influenced university administrators because they also believed in the value of higher education and the need for accessibility to satisfactory library resources and services.

Many of Downs' recommendations seem rudimentary by today's standards; for example, "for economy, efficiency, and effective service, library administration should be centralized" (p. 2), but the prevalence of 1960s campus departmental libraries and diffused authority warranted this type of review. In the area of automation, which libraries were only beginning to experiment with, Downs could only hint at future directions: "Developments in data processing have made feasible the concept of national and international library networks, offering new approaches to problems of gathering and retrieving certain types of information" (p. 5). The provision of photocopying services, established building standards, the recognition of professional librarians as key members of the academic community, the separation of clerical and professional duties in staffing, the exercise of leadership on the part of the National Library and the National Science Library in fostering cooperation, special grants from the Canada Council, and sharing of library resources on a local, regional, and national basis were all flagged as necessary to encourage growth. Downs reiterated William's proposal that 10% of an institutional budget should be earmarked for library collections. Especially concerning collections, the report was explicit: "In no case should a college or university provide less than $150 per year for library maintenance for each full-time student. (p. 7). Further, Downs proposed that

Sustained financial support over a period of years is essential to the growth of strong libraries in Canadian universities; additional appropriations totaling $150,000,000 for collection development will be required over the next decade, beyond present budget allotments and the current rate of annual increases, for retrospective collecting, if these libraries are to reach a stage of development comparable to the leading American university libraries. (p. 6)

One interesting section of *Resources* that sparks interest now reveals student attitudes to 1960s libraries. Students did not prefer study halls and often brought their own books for study purposes. They indicated more reserve books were needed, assistance from staff was inadequate, and material was in another library elsewhere on campus. For their part, faculty suggested stronger research collections, staff specialists for collection development and reference, speedier processing and access to acquired materials, duplicate copies of books in frequent demand, improved inter-library loans, more efficient circulation systems, and, in a direct conflict with Down's recommendation, more departmental libraries, especially in the sciences.

The Down's report was well received. It became the subject of a conference—"Libraries for Tomorrow"—held in Montreal in April 1968 that the AUCC and CACUL convened to discuss the future of Canadian academic libraries. About seventy librarians attended, and papers were presented on future financing by Robert Blackburn (Toronto) and general trends in higher education by Basil Stuart-Stubbs (British Columbia). Although this meeting, subsequent discussions, and library reports on standardization and financing by the AUCC did not

constitute a comprehensive review and working plan for the implementation of the Downs Report, many of its recommendations were taken to heart across Canada's burgeoning university sector. In 1967, Downs concluded that "despite their rapid progress, the Canadian university libraries, on the whole, will require years of concentrated effort to bring their collections up to a high point of excellence." (p. 224), and by 1971, there were six libraries with more than a million volumes: Toronto, McGill, British Columbia, Western, Montreal, and Laval.

For CACUL members, the report highlighted an area of significance that Downs was known for: his support for academic recognition of librarians. "In the case of college and university libraries, the institutions that will be most successful in attracting and holding able staff members are those where librarians are recognized as an integral part of the academic ranks, a vital group in the educational process, with high qualifications for appointment, and all the rights and privileges of other academic employees (p. 110)." When Downs compiled his survey, academic librarians were subject to various terms of service and methods of appointment. He suggested enlisting the support of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) to improve and standardize the status of university professional librarians, an approach adopted by CACUL that was to prove beneficial in gaining status for librarians and creating a common community of interest with faculty during the 1970s.

However, future economic conditions in the 1970s, namely, rising costs and slower growth, often referred to as 'stagflation,' would curb the rapid development of university libraries. Along with increasing rates of inflation, administrators faced new challenges, such as providing resources to support Canadian studies, automated bibliographic control, computerized searching, and sharing information through networking on a national scale. Libraries had to contend with the 'information explosion' as books and journals flooded the scholarly marketplace. New university programs were launched that often lacked adequate library resources. New faculty appointments were made, although it was difficult to support their specializations. The advent of cross-disciplinary programs required new library resource fields and services. The 1970s would be just as challenging as the 1960s, because expectations exceeded eroded revenues. Observers of retrenchment in the decade following the Downs report often refer to a 'golden age' of university growth in the 1960s that had passed.

The reports by Edwin Williams and Robert Down were valuable reviews of current conditions and helpful guides to future action. As well, the reports heightened awareness and visibility concerning library needs in Canadian higher education. The two authors provided an astonishing wealth of information about collections, contemporary conditions, and potential costs of funding improved services. But there was no master national plan envisaged. Together, the two reports highlighted the needs of libraries in the post-secondary sector and

outlined the stunning financial implications. Administrators across the country were left to deal with the level of implementation and coordination with provincial educational authorities. While CACUL and CAUT assumed leadership for professional librarian concerns, the AUCC and senior university officials, together with library directors, were ultimately responsible for encouraging and implementing local progress. For the most part, the efforts of these groups and individuals were successful for several years until the economic recession of 1973–75 introduced organizational retrenchment and fiscal restraint.

The Williams Report is available on the Internet Archive.

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